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Focusing on local leadership, this work is a close study of race and education in Rockingham County, North Carolina, from 1820 to 1970. The long history of race and education is examined in the context of broader state and regional racial politics, with a focus on how both black and white citizens built their schools, maintained them through decades of segregation, and carried out the process of school desegregation, the primary path through which Jim Crow was dismantled across the South. With the historical record found in school board minutes and local newspapers as its research foundation, this dissertation reveals how the public school system was built and operated in one county in the Upper South, where, influenced by state and federal leaders over a century and a half, citizens worked out a framework of small-town and rural schools that ultimately afforded their children and youth equitable access to education. Because four separate school systems existed in the county, it is possible to compare the day-to-day functioning of schools in different communities and to understand more fully how leadership influenced local policies. Covering roughly five periods in local educational history, this study traces the efforts of those who invested in establishing, operating, and improving their public schools, arguing that the involvement of local leaders in each district significantly determined how each system developed and how racially segregated schools were ultimately eliminated. The trajectory of this local history includes the white academies of the antebellum era, the early public schools constructed in the late 1800s, the widening of the town/rural divide as well as the racial gap in the early 1900s, the

challenges of operating multiple school systems during economic depression and war, and the struggle to comply with federal desegregation standards in the late 1960s. Much more than has been generally acknowledged, race was consistently a factor in building and maintaining these public schools, influenced by those who sought reconciliation of blacks and whites as well as those who deepened racial division. A local history such as this one affords us an opportunity to see how the South's difficult racial past affected people at the grassroots level—in their community schools. This study also illuminates a century of agency and activism on the part of the county's black community. African Americans were leaders as they helped create their own educational spaces, maintained and improved segregated institutions, chipped away at Jim Crow restrictions, and exerted as much leverage as they could to desegregate the local public schools. This long and persistent grassroots involvement was a significant part of the black freedom struggle, as incremental change was implemented in a variety of local conditions. Local leaders such as those in Rockingham County who actively sought adequate educational opportunities for their own children, the elimination of segregated schools, and a more equitable society were crucial in the success of the broader civil rights movement. No real progress in the black freedom struggle could have been achieved without eliminating segregated schools that existed as symbols of second-class citizenship in nearly every community in the South.

“THIS MUST BE WORKED OUT LOCALLY”: RACE, EDUCATION, AND LEADERSHIP IN ROCKINGHAM COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA, 1820-1970

by

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APPROVAL PAGE

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exemplary teaching model, but for organizing the dissertation reading group that finally prompted me to get started with my writing. He faithfully read our chapters, met with us monthly, and kept us all writing so that we made progress toward completing this massive project. This motivation was crucial for me. As the committee chair, Dr. Charles Bolton has been an exceptional mentor, providing calm and positive guidance throughout this process, even when I felt overwhelmed under a mountain of detail. His expansive knowledge of the history of the South, plus his expert editing and generous availability to talk over what I was discovering in my research all combined to make it possible for me to complete this dissertation. I can never thank you all enough.

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CHAPTER I

"THIS MUST BE WORKED OUT LOCALLY"[1]: RACE, EDUCATION, AND LEADERSHIP IN ROCKINGHAM COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA, 1820-1970

"This must be worked out locally," Rosa Parks wrote into her notes at a workshop at Highlander Folk School in Monteagle, Tennessee, July 27, 1955, four months before she refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus, setting off the successful boycott. At Highlander, Parks participated in several training sessions focusing on strategies for implementing the *Brown v. Board* mandate to eliminate segregated schools. One was titled "Working toward Integrated Public Schools in Your Own Community." Activists like Parks understood that, by ordering the end of racially segregated schooling, the 1954 *Brown* decision presented a momentous opportunity. Civil rights advocates through the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) had worked over many decades for this moment, eventually using the courts "to attack the very principle of segregation as unconstitutional." Five "representative cases from different parts of the country" filed on behalf of mostly young elementary students in Virginia, South Carolina, Delaware, the District of Columbia, and Kansas were bundled together and became known by the name of one plaintiff, Oliver Brown, father of seven-year-old Linda Brown of Topeka, Kansas. Brown's narrative made clear the inequities faced by people of color

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1 "This must be worked out locally" is a phrase taken from the handwritten notes of Rosa Parks at a workshop she attended at Highlander Folk School in Monteagle, Tennessee, July 27, 1955. See "Rosa Parks Notes, School Desegregation Workshop, Highlander Center, July 24-August 8, 1955," *Civil Rights Movement Veterans,* http://www.crmvet.org/docs/5507park.htm.

in that community: a young child was denied access to a public school close to her home while having to walk through the dangerous switching yards between railroad tracks to catch a bus to her segregated school. In several earlier cases, gains had been made in opening up public graduate and professional schools to African Americans, but in *Brown*, justices declared, "Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." To restrict black citizens to segregated facilities was a denial of their Fourteenth Amendment rights to equal protection under the law. Consequently, the doctrine of segregation that underpinned the racial hierarchy of nearly every community in the South (and many others beyond) was no longer acceptable. Just how to implement this transformation of American society presented questions of "considerable complexity," historian John Hope Franklin noted, because of the "variety of local conditions" and the "wide applicability of the decision." The mandate meant that all across America, schools and their leaders would be under greater scrutiny. Civil rights activists not only realized that school desegregation would have to be "worked out locally," but wanted to convey, as Parks wrote in her training notes, that they were not just seeking to improve schools for black children, which they had been doing for decades, but were "working with [people] to bring better ed[ucation] in a democratic society." Gaining access to education was a crucial part of the black freedom struggle, and much of this effort took place long before the *Brown v. Board* decision of 1954.[2]

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2 Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of* Brown v. Board of Education *and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1977), 408-410, 540; John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans, Fifth Edition* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980), 408-410; Juan Williams, *Eyes on the Prize: Americas Civil Rights Years: 1954-1965* (New York: Viking Penguin Inc., 1987), 22; "Rosa Parks Notes," *Civil Rights Movement Veterans.* Williams includes photographs of the five students directly named in the *Brown* case: Harry Briggs, Jr.,

For much of American history, the omnipresent symbol of democratic promise across the nation has been the local school house. In fact, from the earliest days of the republic, education has been regarded as the foundation of American democracy. In colonial America, education, responsible citizenship, and democratic principles were intertwined early, as both religious and secular interests met in the new nation's schools. Christian motivation for being able to read the Bible combined with Enlightenment interest in enabling informed participants in the new republic to create a remarkably literate white citizenry, especially in New England. Access to schooling expanded in the 1830s and 1840s as educational reformers such as Horace Mann helped to establish a strong system of "common schools," "schools that the whole population would have in common: tuition free, tax-supported, [and] meeting statewide standards." By 1840, when the United States census first asked about literacy, only about 9 percent of white American adults were illiterate, a rate that rivaled the "much admired" Prussian education system. Yet access to schools in much of the country has frequently been limited. In the South, few except the elite had much formal education until public school systems developed in the early twentieth century. Even then, getting to the local school, if one was close enough or even existed, was a struggle for both black and white, especially for rural or small-town students. Still, people of all classes and ethnicities have seen education as the pathway to their goals. Denied schooling during slavery, education has

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Ethel Belton, Dorothy Davis, Linda Brown, and Spottswood Bolling. For insights into school desegregation outside the South, see Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008) and Ronald P. Formisano, *Boston Against Busing: Race, Class, and Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

had for African Americans a particularly poignant meaning—freedom. Many after the Civil War, like intellectual and jurist Albion Tourgée, saw education as an obligation owed to the formerly enslaved as "an act of justice." Large numbers of northern teachers combined with those of the native South to assist in opening up educational opportunities in the post-bellum southern and border states for black citizens of all ages eager to attend school. This understanding of education as freedom is what made Alabama Governor George Wallace's "standing in the schoolhouse door" a century later such a powerful symbol of cruel racism. In communities across the South, as school districts formed in the late 1800s and schools were built in a multitude of small towns and across the countryside, race was almost always a factor. Intensifying Jim Crow segregation that mandated separate schools widened the gulf between white and black citizens. In this climate, the school house remained a symbol of promise for some but for African Americans was also a daily reminder of the second-class citizenship status that burdened the children who entered its doors.[3]

Although extensive scholarship on nearly every aspect of the black freedom struggle has been produced, surprisingly little addresses exactly how access to education developed over time in thousands of small towns and rural communities and how rural systems operated their racially segregated schools. And, although many studies address

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3 Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 449-55; Heather Andrea Williams, *Self Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 43, 52-53; Albion Tourgée quoted in Mark Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice: Albion Tourgée and the Quest for Racial Equality from the Civil War to Plessy v. Ferguson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 183. Quotation defining "common" schools, Howe, 453. Howe notes that in 1840, the rate of literacy in the New England states was 98 percent. Williams presents abundant evidence that for former enslaved people "education signified empowerment and self-determination."

how school desegregation was implemented in large, contested cities, few give attention to how this process, the twentieth century reform that arguably directly affected more Americans than any other, was carried out in the rural South.[4] To contribute to a better understanding of these issues, this study examines the intersections of race and education in Rockingham County, North Carolina, from 1820 to 1970, a period of time that allows us to understand how a workable educational framework was built for both races, how racial segregation unfolded, and then how a legally sanctioned structure of dual school systems was dismantled. To give further context to educational developments and show how race impacted the schools that thousands of ordinary citizens found such a meaningful part of their lives, I have also attempted through my research to reconstruct the social and political landscape of this area from the early nineteenth century through 1970.

Rockingham County is in the north-central area of Piedmont North Carolina and is bordered by three other North Carolina counties and the state of Virginia (see Figure 1). For much of its history Rockingham was among the most populous counties in the state and in the 1950s had approximately sixty-five thousand citizens.[5] Situated midway between Greensboro, North Carolina, and Danville, Virginia, two sites of considerable

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4 Brian J. Daugherity and Charles C. Bolton, eds., *With All Deliberate Speed: Implementing* Brown v. Board of Education (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2008), vii. Bolton and Daugherity note that extensive and thorough work on civil rights history has been done, but that "relatively little of this work has explained how the mandate of the *Brown* decision—ending school desegregation—was fulfilled."

5 United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Population of States and Counties of the United States: 1790 to 1990, From the Twenty-One Decennial Censuses, March 1996, https://www.census.gov/population/www/censusdata/PopulationofStatesandCountiesoftheUnitedStates1790-1990.pdf. Of one hundred counties in North Carolina, Rockingham County was the seventh most populous in the state in 1900 and the thirteenth largest in 1950, when its population numbered 64,816.

civil rights activism, county citizens were close enough to be affected by nearby racial unrest in surrounding cities.

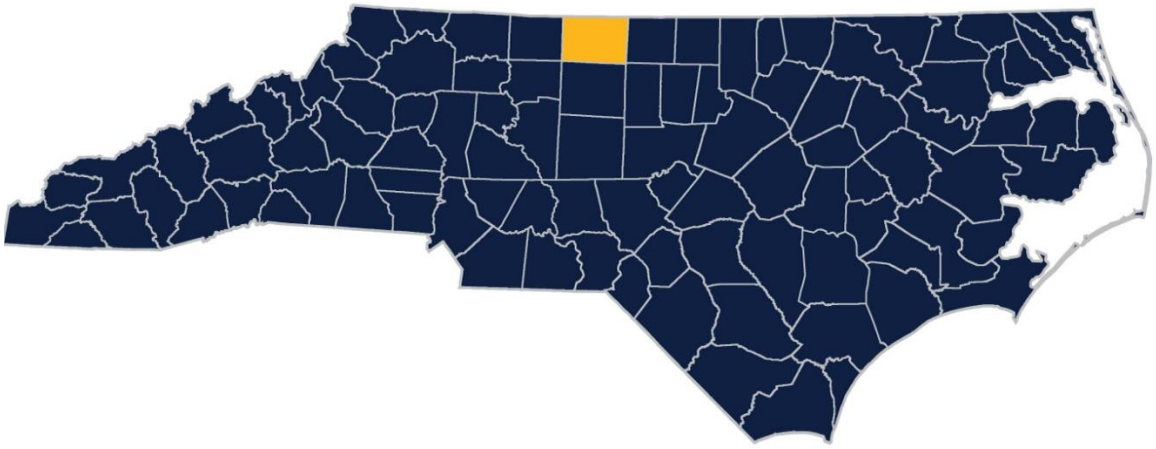

Figure 1. Location of Rockingham County, North Carolina. Source: Map by Graham Russell.

One of the early federal lawsuits in North Carolina regarding school desegregation was filed by Reidsville families in 1962. The county had three active chapters of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) operating during these decades, as well as county residents who were state leaders of white segregationist organizations. In addition, the county was also home to the governor of North Carolina from 1954-1960, Luther Hodges, and to other important state leaders of this era, including the first woman on the North Carolina Supreme Court, Susie Sharpe, and the president of the North Carolina Senate, Clarence Stone. In economics and demographics, the county was representative of much of Piedmont North Carolina and the Upper South of the time, with plentiful jobs in textiles, furniture, and tobacco. Rockingham County was also the source of the important U.S. Supreme Court case,

Griggs v. Duke Power (1971), which legal scholars have hailed as "doing for employment what *Brown* did for education."[6] Understanding the history of racial politics of the area also furthers understanding of the factors that prompted the inclusion of Rockingham as one of the North Carolina counties required to obtain preclearance under the Voting Rights Act of 1965.[7]

The county also had the unusual circumstance of attempting to operate four separate school districts—three city systems in Madison, Leaksville, and Reidsville—as well as a rural unit, Rockingham County. Each of these systems had its own superintendent, budget, and school board. The county was one of only two in the state to have such a complicated framework for local education.[8] In addition to four separate white systems, the area had a significant black school population, especially in the towns of Reidsville and Madison, as well as one small Indian school in the northwest corner of the county. Comparing and contrasting the leaders and policies of these four school districts, this dissertation examines how race impacted educational opportunities as they developed in various areas of the county over a century. In the belief that, as historian Patricia Sullivan asserts, "local histories are essential to an understanding of the dynamic

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6 Robert Samuel Smith, *Race, Labor and Civil Rights:* Griggs versus Duke Power *and the Struggle for Equal Employment Opportunity* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Press, 2008), 1. See this volume for a "bottom up" examination of the *Griggs* case, a seminal decision regarding racial discrimination in the workplace. The court decided "that private employers could not use any tests and other screening devices that were not necessary to select employees if their result was to exclude blacks from employment" (Smith quoting Judge Damon Keith of the Sixth District Circuit Court, 1).

7 "Jurisdictions Previously Covered by Section 5," Civil Rights Division, United States Department of Justice, http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/vot/sec_5/covered.php.

8 *Educational Directory of North Carolina, 1949-1950*, State Superintendent of Public Instruction (Raleigh, North Carolina), 89-92, https://archive.org/details/educationaldirec1950nort/page/106. The other more complicated educational framework was in Robeson County, where school leaders had to deal not only with four white school districts, but also a triracial system with segregated schools for blacks and Native Americans.

of twentieth-century civil rights struggles," I have examined local factors at the intersection of race and education, focusing on how leaders, both black and white, influenced the development of schooling for the county's students. This project examines leadership in each era studied, giving particular attention to local leaders from the announcement of the *Brown* decision through the era of desegregation and arguing that the involvement of local leaders in each district significantly determined how each advanced to become a unitary school system not divided by race.[9] As a result of a close examination of local records, examples of both activism and resistance in Rockingham County, North Carolina, emerge in the narrative, shedding light on previously little-known local leaders such as school superintendents, board members, business leaders, teachers, and parents.

To determine those leaders most crucial in the racial politics of each era, this study contains a broader history of race relations in the county, from the antebellum period to 1970, when the last segregated school in the county finally was eliminated. To understand the desegregation process, it is necessary to understand more broadly how educational opportunities expanded for both races and how schools operated during Jim Crow segregation. White involvement in the public schools is obviously an integral part of any study of race and education. Building an educational system for their families was also a struggle over many decades, and white citizens were seriously concerned with the success of their schools. Issues of race, however, often entered into the day-to-day

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9 Patricia Sullivan, "Southern Reformers, the New Deal and the Movement's Foundation," in *New Directions in Civil Rights Studies*, eds. Armstead L. Robinson and Patricia Sullivan (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), 81. Sullivan characterizes the dismantling of legalized Jim Crow as "the culmination of a vast array of forces, combining hundreds of local struggles."

functioning of the local schools, reflecting the racial hierarchy to which Southerners had largely become accustomed. In many ways, a study of this one location over time offers many valuable insights into race and education and, thus, the broader history of the state and region.

Over a century and a half, schools emerged in this county of rural countryside and small towns, and race was consistently a factor in how they developed. This study identifies roughly five periods in the struggle to establish accessible and racially equitable education in the county. The first is the pre-Civil War era, when Rockingham County was home to several good quality white academies and was the first county in the state to establish a public school. After the Civil War, a second particularly interesting period of school building took place. This period is often overlooked as having significant impact on the development of schools in North Carolina, but, as shown in this research, following the directives of the newly written state Constitution, the school leaders of the 1870s and 1880s were crucially important in Rockingham County in constructing its first real public school system and trying to offer equal access to both white and black students. A third educational phase can be seen in the history of Rockingham County schools that reflects the white supremacy campaigns of the early 1900s, as schools became more segregated and inequities widened. In this period, white schools were consolidated, modern facilities were built, and the rural/town divide widened. Though becoming more firmly entrenched in a segregated world, African Americans also saw some improved education in this era through local leadership, grassroots agency, and outside philanthropy. The fourth period examined closely in this study is the mid-

twentieth century between the Great Depression and the *Brown* decision in 1954. The impact of race on local education is clearly seen in the inefficient, unwieldy, and nearly impossible operation of four white school systems also segregated by race.

The second half of this dissertation closely examines a fifth phase of the county's educational history, the intersection of race and education from the Supreme Court's announcement of the *Brown* decision through the dealings of each school system with federal officials as they eliminated segregated schools in Rockingham County in 1970. Especially around the fortieth and fiftieth anniversaries of *Brown*, historians have debated the legal ruling's effectiveness. Michael J. Klarman argued that the decision had "little direct impact" on school desegregation, since a whole decade passed before significant racial integration was achieved and that *Brown*'s "indirect contribution to racial change continues to be more generally assumed than demonstrated." Instead, Klarman asserted, federal intervention in public schools by the courts spawned more white backlash than it inspired civil rights activism. This dissertation, however, bolsters the view of James C. Cobb and other historians that despite white resistance, *Brown* was, indeed, a direct catalyst for change and a transformative achievement for those seeking social justice and equity in education.[10] This study is a local history that explains the factors that facilitated such reform, as well as the forces that attempted to delay or thwart these changes. There was considerable white opposition to desegregation in Rockingham County, but there was also an equal or even greater response by many to accept the court's mandate to eliminate

10 Michael J. Klarman, "How *Brown* Changed Race Relations: The Backlash Thesis," *Journal of American History* 81, no. 1 (June 1994): 81-83. See also James C. Cobb, *The* Brown *Decision, Jim Crow, and Southern Identity* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2005) and Mark Tushnet, "The Significance of *Brown v. Board of Education*," *Virginia Law Review* 80, no. 1 (February 1994): 173-84.

segregated schools. In fact, even in this rural setting, the decision was a critical development that prompted local civil rights action, including petitions, voter registration drives, and even a strike of black workers in the immediate aftermath of *Brown*. There is no doubt that dismantling the Jim Crow system of segregated schools was essential to further progress for African Americans and that the federal support that *Brown* established was crucial to this effort.

A vast literature on race, education, and civil rights exists; the scholarship on the black freedom struggle, is according to noted historian Harvard Sitkoff, in fact, "nothing short of phenomenal—both in quantity and quality."[11] Several prominent themes addressing education and civil rights have developed since the emergence of social history and the first scholarly works on the movement by historians around 1970.[12] Much of the scholarship on race and the schools has been from a national or regional perspective and nearly all civil rights histories acknowledge the watershed moment represented in the *Brown* decision. Richard Kluger's *Simple Justice*, which includes a detailed account of how the cases bundled as *Brown* made their way to the Supreme Court and the behind-the-scenes debates and maneuvers that made the unanimous decision outlawing segregation possible, is rightfully considered the seminal work on the topic.[13] Others present a variety of perspectives on *Brown*'s importance, examine

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11 Harvard Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality*, Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Edition (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008), 245. For a comprehensive bibliographical essay see Sitkoff, 245-78.

12 Charles W. Eagles, "Toward New Histories of the Civil Rights Era," *Journal of Southern History* 66 (November 2000): 821. Eagles notes that the first scholarly historical works on the civil rights era were published around 1970, "when half a dozen important books appeared. Several of them addressed opponents of the movement," rather than the movement itself.

13 Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice*; Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality,* 257. Sitkoff asserts that *Simple Justice* is "in a class by itself."

responses to its mandates, and consider whether the ruling actually brought about desegregation of schools.[14] In recent decades, the history of the black freedom struggle has been expanded by Jacqueline Dowd Hall and many others to include a "long civil rights movement." In this view, the story of integrating the schools becomes one of "overlapping grass-roots struggles," reaching back into the 1930s and 1940s and after the "classical" era into the 1970s.[15] This dissertation extends the long civil rights movement to include the earlier decades of grassroots activists who sought to improve their schools even while segregated, often in substandard buildings of the kind long abandoned by whites.

Scores of historians have approached the black freedom struggle through "grassroots" studies. Notably, Charles Payne has argued for more emphasis on "the role 'ordinary' people played in changing the country and the enormous personal costs that sometimes entailed for them."[16] In his bibliographical overview of civil rights scholarship, Charles Eagles echoes this emphasis on local, grassroots participants, suggesting that one fruitful path forward for historians would be to pursue a "wider range

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14 For representative works on these topics, see Michael J. Klarman, Brown v. Board of Education *and the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Charles C. Bolton, *The Hardest Deal of All: The Battle over School Integration in Mississippi, 1870-1980* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005); and James T. Patterson, Brown v. Board of Education*: A Civil Rights Milestone and its Troubled Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

15 Jacqueline Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (March, 2005): 1233-63. Hall argues that a "more robust, more progressive, and truer story" of a "long civil rights movement" should be explored by historians, expanding the "classical" phase of the movement beyond the decade following *Brown* to include the roots of the struggle in the 1930s and 1940s and to locations outside the South. She further asserts that civil rights activism "was continuously and ferociously contested, and in the 1960s and 1970s inspired a 'movement of movements' that defies any narrative of collapse." Quotations from Hall, 1235, 1255.

16 Charles Payne, "The View from the Trenches," in *Debating the Civil Rights Movement, 1945-1968* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006), 125.

of community studies." "The local level," he asserts, "provides a particularly important perspective on the desegregation of education, a central subject throughout the civil rights era," and he notes, "the stories of many otherwise unknown centers of activity should also be recounted." Eagles advises historians to research local communities' involvement in their schools. In fact, he urges,

> The pivotal events and key individuals in unheralded places could further enhance an appreciation of the struggle in the lives of ordinary communities and of the movement in general. Especially needed are explanations of how the movement involved and affected people in the rural South.[17]

It is the Southern rural and small-town school climate that is addressed in this study.

An early effort to focus on the impact of school desegregation on a local level was Raymond Wolters's *The Burden of Brown,* in which he revisited the communities where the five cases bundled as *Brown* originated.[18] Informed by such local scholarship and grassroots works as Constance Curry's *Silver Rights*, which records the activism of one Mississippi family, "the unsung heroes of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement who risked their lives and livelihoods to secure a better education for their children," my analysis is a local study and considers the perspectives of the students and families directly involved in early school desegregation.[19] The volume of essays, *With All Deliberate Speed,* edited by Charles C. Bolton and Brian J. Daugherity, directly addresses the question of how *Brown*'s mandate was implemented in twelve different states, including several outside

17 Eagles, "Toward New Histories," 836-37.
18 Raymond Wolters, *The Burden of Brown: Thirty Years of School Desegregation* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984).
19 Constance Curry, *Silver Rights* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1995), dedication page.

the South. Arguing that the "implementation of *Brown* was a central component of the early civil rights movement," the editors present a set of essays on the grassroots efforts to desegregate schools, concentrating on the work of African Americans and their supporters at the local and state levels and examining the "growing white southern opposition" to civil rights activism. Their assessment that "local conditions typically dictated the details of compliance" with federal desegregation requirements informs my approach and provides a foundation for my research into the particular history of desegregation and race relations in Rockingham County, North Carolina.[20]

A growing number of historical studies specifically address race and schools in North Carolina, and this research project, focusing on previously unstudied communities, builds on these works. Overall, these North Carolina studies convey the complicated struggle to build the educational system in North Carolina, the challenge of both whites and people of color to obtain an education through the years of segregation, and the efforts to eventually dismantle segregated structures. Two volumes, James L. Leloudis's *Schooling the New South* and James D. Anderson's *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*, provide valuable insights into southern education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Both argue for the grassroots agency of students, teachers, and other community members, both black and white, in developing public schools and widening their access.[21] In *Race and Education in North Carolina; From Segregation to Desegregation,* John E. Batchelor devotes only one chapter to an overview of how race

20 Daugherity and Bolton, eds., *With All Deliberate Speed*, vii-viii.

21 James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); James L. Leloudis, *Schooling the New South: Pedagogy, Self, and Society in North Carolina, 1880-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

influenced school access in the state before *Brown*, but in the rest of the book, he records a detailed look at the implementation of desegregation in North Carolina. Even in what was seen as the progressive Upper South, his research confirms that both state and local white leadership were convinced for nearly a decade after *Brown* that they could avoid integration of schools.[22] Anchored by William Chafe's *Civilities and Civil Rights* (1982), historians have studied the desegregation process in the cities of Greensboro, Charlotte, and the Triangle region (Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill). Chafe's study of Greensboro, North Carolina, set an agenda of local civil rights research for future scholars, arguing that desegregation finally happened largely on white terms, driven by the leaders who wanted to protect the city's progressive image and reputation for "civility."[23] Legal scholar and historian Davison M. Douglas presents the desegregation process in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County in great detail in *Reading, Writing, and Race* (1995). He assesses the use of the courts as opposed to political strategies in the black community and examines carefully the responses of whites, especially leaders, who like their counterparts in Greensboro, were vigilant about protecting the city's reputation as a promising place to do business. Perhaps the strongest component of Douglas's scholarship is his explanation of the legal process through which North Carolina's largest city moved from *Brown* through the *Swann* decision, establishing busing as a potential

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22 John E. Batchelor, *Race and Education in North Carolina; From Segregation to Desegregation* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2015). The North Carolina General Assembly even stated in 1955 that "the mixing of the races in the public schools . . . cannot be accomplished and should not be attempted." See joint resolution quoted in David S. Cecelski, *Along Freedom Road: Hyde County, North Carolina, and the Fate of Black Schools in the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 25.

23 William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

vehicle for achieving true desegregation.[24] Focusing on a third urban area of North Carolina, historian J. Michael McElreath has examined how schools were desegregated in the Triangle area—Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill. According to McElreath in his study of several school districts in the central part of the state, the single most important factor in integrating public schools was local leadership. "Absent strong pro-integration leadership from the state level," he argues, "desegregation's success depended on the quality of local leaders."[25] In a similar approach, I present evidence of local leadership during a series of educational eras in Rockingham County, North Carolina, comparing the actions and policies of community leaders—black and white educators, journalists, business leaders, and ministers—in the four separate school districts. The research revealed many different approaches to the daily operation of the public schools, as well as four separate paths to the ultimate elimination of segregated schools, including the denial of student transfers that prompted a federal suit, progressive, incremental implementation of desegregation plans, misunderstanding of compliance requirements, and contentious negotiations with the U.S. Office of Civil Rights over standards and deadlines.

Two studies of education and race in rural North Carolina, in particular, have posited that the black community lost a great deal in the desegregation process and attempted to fight policies put in place on white terms only. Vanessa Siddle Walker

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24 Davison M. Douglas, *Reading, Writing, and Race: The Desegregation of the Charlotte Schools* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

25 J. Michael McElreath, "The Cost of Opportunity: School Desegregation's Complicated Calculus in North Carolina," in *With All Deliberate Speed: Implementing* Brown v. Board of Education, eds. Brian J. Daugherity and Charles C. Bolton (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2008), 24, 23. McElreath notes that leadership as the determinant of successful desegregation was especially true for the Chapel Hill system.

recounts the efforts of African Americans in Caswell County, North Carolina, to build a thriving segregated black school in *Their Highest Potential.* Citizen committees regularly came before the local school board requesting school improvements, and black educators worked over several decades to make their schools a "valued educational environment." Through the example of the Caswell County Training School, Walker argues that some segregated black schools were, in fact, quite successful and that during desegregation in the late 1960s, the black community experienced loss. Perhaps the most compelling of the works focusing on desegregation in North Carolina is *Along Freedom Road*, a study of the year-long struggle of African Americans in rural Hyde County, by David Cecelski. White school leaders "made school desegregation a one-way street," according to Cecelski, and were intent on closing black schools to symbolize "the continuity of white control." In addition, as the author shows, there was a growing segregationist movement in the area; more than six thousand joined the Ku Klux Klan in North Carolina between 1964 and 1967, and "tens of thousands attended their rallies." In face of this strong opposition, black students and their families committed to a year-long boycott of the county schools to keep the traditionally black schools, so significant in their rural community, from closing and buildings abandoned. As Cecelski shows, "School desegregation was a far more complex matter than a demand by blacks to attend school with reluctant or hostile whites."[26] In Rockingham County, some of these same

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26 Vanessa Siddle Walker, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 178, 214; Cecelski, *Along Freedom Road*, 7, 10, 39, 54. Charles Eagles has acknowledged the valuable contributions of both David Cecelski and Davison Douglas to the historiography of school desegregation and urges that their work should be "supplemented by accounts of a variety of other communities as they experienced desegregation." See Eagles, "Toward New Histories," 837.

issues faced African Americans as they worked with white school administrators to eliminate racial apartheid in the schools but also preserve elements of their traditions, maintain employment for black teachers and principals, and prevent the abandonment of the school buildings that had come to mean so much to their community.

Three recent works have particular value to North Carolina history and informed my research on race, education, and leadership in Rockingham County. Robert Samuel Smith's *Race, Labor, and Civil Rights:* Griggs versus Duke Power *and the Struggle for Equal Employment Opportunity* records the details of the legal challenge brought by black workers at the Duke Power Steam plant in the Draper area of Rockingham County, charging that they were limited to janitorial jobs, not because they had no high school diplomas, as the company argued, but because of their race. The case was decided by the United States Supreme Court in 1971, mandating fair hiring practices, including tests for placement and promotion, that had no discriminatory impact. Further, Smith uncovers the "personal histories of the plaintiffs [largely county residents] and their contributions to the black freedom movement," identifying them as "foot soldiers and local leaders of the civil rights community" and connecting their activism directly to the work of the Reidsville NAACP.[27] In his meticulously detailed article, "The Dilemma over Moderates," Jim Bissett compares the ways two North Carolina school systems in Alamance County—the county unit and the Burlington city district—dealt with federal authorities and the public during the desegregation process. Although the rhetoric and tactics of school leadership differed substantially, the outcome for both systems was the

27 Smith, *Race, Labor, and Civil Rights*, ix, 2, 81-84.

same: they retained federal funding and "managed to avoid engaging in meaningful desegregation" until all their options were "completely exhausted."[28] A third work, Glenda Gilmore's "Educational Capital and Human Flourishing: North Carolina's Public Schools and Universities, 1865-2015" presents "a long view of the state's educational history," focusing on funding, racial politics, and the commitment of citizens to improve the public school system. In the essay, which is included in *New Voyages to Carolina: Reinterpreting North Carolina History*, a collection of fresh perspectives on the state's history and culture, Gilmore identifies five periods in public school history and explores the inequities in the state's schools that developed over time. Documenting efforts to alleviate these inequalities, Gilmore concludes that the "productive friction of black challenges to white power structures" resulted in improved public schools for all. In the process, "adversities bred opportunities" and an "enviable public school and university system" developed in North Carolina, which in turn "fueled the engines of commerce" and continues to provide "educational capital" to the state's economy.[29]

In an examination of race and education over a century and a half, many aspects of a broader history of Rockingham County, the Piedmont, and the state of North Carolina unfold. It is my hope that this study can add to the work of local historians, especially that of Lindley S. Butler, whose *Rockingham County: A Brief History* (1982) is the comprehensive volume on the county's past. It is also possible that constructing an

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28 Jim Bissett, "The Dilemma over Moderates: School Desegregation in Alamance County, North Carolina," *Journal of Southern History* 81, no. 4 (November 2015): 928-29.

29 Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, "Educational Capital and Human Flourishing: North Carolina's Public Schools and Universities, 1865-2015," in *New Voyages to Carolina: Reinterpreting North Carolina History*, eds. Larry E. Tise and Jeffrey J. Crow (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 194-96.

analysis of race and education in this previously unstudied location makes contributions to a deeper understanding of how segregated education fits into the long black freedom struggle, as well as how one of the most significant reform movements of the past century—the desegregation of schools—involved and affected local people. While it may be true that "southerners are perhaps the most studied people in the U.S.," this dissertation argues for even further research about ordinary citizens such as those in Rockingham County, North Carolina. It is clear from recent events that Americans do not understand our history, especially our troubling racial past, as well as we think. We need the work of historians presenting narratives based on a thorough examination of original sources to further our understanding of a complicated history. As historian Jacquelyn Dowd Hall has noted, "Clearly, the stories we tell . . . matter; they shape how we see our own world. 'Facts' must be interpreted, and those interpretations . . . become primary sources of human action." The stories in this racial history are not always comfortable to reflect upon, but even though considering them might be at times painful, it is important to capture in written histories as much of the past as we can, in an effort, as historian David Goldfield reminds us, not to erase, forget, or alter the history itself, but "to remember it better."[30]

30 Lindley S. Butler, *Rockingham County: A Brief History* (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, 1982); Hall, "Civil Rights and the Uses of the Past," 1239; David Goldfield, *Still Fighting the Civil War: The American South and Southern History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), xii, 10.

CHAPTER II

RACIAL POLITICS AND SEGREGATED EDUCATION IN ROCKINGHAM COUNTY, 1820-1900

The racial politics of Rockingham County in the nineteenth century reflected those of the broader region during this era and had great significance for education. In antebellum years, the access of some white children to academies and early common schools contrasted with the restrictions placed on African American youth in a slave society, who had little or no chance to achieve literacy. Despite the specific instances of Ku Klux Klan violence during the 1868-1870 terror campaign in the county and a return to white Democratic governance, the influence of Republicans' biracial efforts had positive effects on schooling in the area. The progressive North Carolina 1868 Constitution and its mandate of uniform educational opportunities encouraged local school officials to create a system of county school districts in the 1870s that offered expanded schooling for the area's students of both races. Although Rockingham County's schools were segregated by race, as they were in the rest of North Carolina, there was an effort for several years, even after Republicans were no longer in charge in the county and in Raleigh, to make sure that schools for black students were available in each township, that teachers for both races were trained, and that local school committees were held accountable for the schools in their districts. Throughout the late 1800s, white and black schools were about equally funded, but over time and into the next century, separate white and "colored" committees and districts emerged in the county and, as a

result, black schools and teachers functioned more and more on their own. While the entire county was war-weary and struggled to recover after the Civil War ended in 1865, economically the late nineteenth century was largely defined by agricultural strength and commercial and industrial advancement. The county was also eventually marked by the deepening entrenchment of white supremacy into social, economic, and political structures. In this environment, the public schools slowly emerged and grew along with the county. Schools for both races were sources of pride for their communities, as leaders continued to work out locally ways to build and support better educational opportunities for Rockingham County's children.

Antebellum Education

Antebellum Rockingham County was not a place dominated by plantation slavery, but much of the political, economic, and social power was in the hands of a planter class, many of whom were slaveholders. A number of large two-story brick or frame homes where these prominent slaveholders lived dotted the riverways and the crude country roads. The largest slaveholder in the county was Dr. Edward T. Brodnax. In addition to Brodnax, who owned 174 slaves in 1860, other influential land and slave owners of the antebellum and Civil War era were Thomas S. Gallaway, Thomas Roach, David S. Reid, and Thomas Settle, Jr. The families of planters such as these had some access to private tutors or academies, so their power extended to educational opportunities as well. Schooling was available to only a few of the white citizens of Rockingham County in the antebellum era, however. A small brick "plantation school" on the grounds of Judge Thomas Settle's home east of Reidsville was one of the earliest places of learning in the

county. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the most privileged young men of Rockingham may have attended the academy of David Caldwell in Guilford County and studied Greek, Latin, and mathematics. One such student was the future judge and champion of public education, Archibald DeBow Murphey of nearby Caswell County, who recalled that Caldwell's school was the "most prominent and useful" of the few schools available, but that obtaining an education for young men like himself was still difficult and opportunities "very limited." Families sometimes joined together to employ a teacher for their children for a short tenure of two or three months, but otherwise, most whites had few educational opportunities.[1]

Access to education for whites was extended somewhat when the first "classical academies" were established in 1820 in the two towns of the county—Leaksville and Madison. Leaksville Academy was advertised in the 1820s as offering a course of study for young men that included "the sciences, the Latin and Greek languages, and English Grammar at thirty dollars per annum." Teacher John Silliman emphasized the healthy environs "exempt from disease" as well as the debating society, whose purpose was "the improvement of the mind," and the "collection of a library of valuable books" available to his students. Similarly, the Madison Academy, "situated in the west end of

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1 Lindley S. Butler, *Rockingham County: A Brief History* (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History), 40-41, 45; Charles L. Coon, *The Beginnings of Public Education in North Carolina: A Documentary History, 1790-1840,* Volume I (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton Printing Company, 1908), 22-23, *Documenting the American South*, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/coon976/menu.html; *History of Education in North Carolina,* North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction, 1993, 6. In discussing slavery in the county, Butler also identified two known slave traders—R. G. Hopper and Anselom Reid—the latter who "circulated throughout the region with his coffle of slaves." The original source of Murphey's comments was an oration delivered at the University of North Carolina on June 27, 1827, and printed in the *Raleigh* (NC) *Register,* July 24, 1827.

Rockingham county," advertised to potential students in 1820. The trustees of the new academy touted the qualifications of their teacher, Mr. James Franklin Martin, a recent graduate of the University of North Carolina, and the possibility of boarding young men with "good families" for "$30 per Session."[2] An academy was also opened in Wentworth at the Salem Church in 1843 as well as a school in the Belews Creek area in 1855. For other families, the academies available in nearby Caswell County, including several for young women, may have been of interest. As early as 1808, Caswell Academy was widely advertised as being modeled after the University in Chapel Hill, having an "elegant and complete set of Globes and Maps," and being in a healthy setting where "every species of vice and immorality are checked in their infancy."[3]

Both the schools in Leaksville and Madison were expanded in following decades. In Leaksville, a two-story brick building was constructed, and by 1839 there were academies for both males and females. The young men were taught for a time by Patrick M. Henry, a descendant of the Revolutionary era orator. In the decade before the Civil

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2 Butler, *Rockingham County,* 45; "Leaksville Academy Advertisement," *The* (Raleigh, NC) *Star,* January 28, 1820 and "Madison Academy Advertisement," *Raleigh* (NC) *Register*, June 23, 1820, both in Charles L. Coon, editor, *North Carolina Schools and Academies* (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton, 1915), 345. Two other early academies in Rockingham County are listed as receiving state charters: Clio Montana Seminary in 1801 and Shady Grove Academy in 1825, by Stephen Beauregard Weeks, "Beginnings of the Common School System in the South," in *Report of the Commissioner for Education*, United States Bureau of Education (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1898), 1394, 1399.

3 Butler, *Rockingham County*, 46; Coon, *North Carolina Schools and Academies*,18-33; "Advertisement for Caswell Academy," *The* (Raleigh, NC) *Star*, December 1, 1808, 19. America's Historical Papers, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, http://infoweb.newsbank.com.libproxy.uncg.edu. Butler records that the instructor for the Salem Church School was Numa F. Reid and the Margarita Seminary in the Belews Creek area was operated by Marinda Branson Moore. Moore also devised the Dixie Readers, a set of textbooks used throughout the area. Coon relates that Caswell County, to the east of Rockingham, boasted a number of classical academies and female seminaries in the antebellum era, including Caswell Academy, where future Congressman Bartlett Yancey was the teacher, Hyco Academy, Springfield Academy, Milton Female Academy, Miss Prendergast's School, Pickard's School, Miss Ballantine's Seminary, Mrs. Stith's Seminary, and Leasburg Classical School.

War, the Madison Academy was renamed Beulah Academy. Starting in 1858, the Baptist minister, Lewis H. Shook, taught there two years, closed the school during the war, and reopened it, teaching there until 1872. Having served the youth of Madison since 1820, the last teacher at this academy, which stood overlooking the Dan River and railroad tracks, was Julius M. Weatherly, in 1898-1900. Because of the prominence of the school, one of Madison's main streets was named Academy Street.[4]

As part of their pride in the area's antebellum educational legacy, Rockingham County citizens today assert that the site of the first public school for whites in the state was in the Williamsburg section in the southeastern corner of the county. Claims to this "first" are best supported by a short announcement, which appeared in the *North Carolina* (Raleigh, NC) *Standard* on February 12, 1840, and then days later in the *Greensboro* (NC) *Patriot* on February 18, 1840, about a year after the state General Assembly passed important legislation that for the first time meant that the state was committed to public schools. This record congratulated the ten men making up the "superintendency" of the schools for having the county surveyed, marking it off into districts eight miles long and four and a half miles wide and getting the "first free school in Rockingham county . . . into operation," "probably the first free school commenced in the State." Yet locals were unaware of this achievement in the mid-twentieth century, as even school officials and local historians seemed bewildered by the claim that had

4 Butler, *Rockingham County*, 45; Nancy Watkins, "Some Garden Sass," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, August 14, 1929, 6; "Famous Beulah Academy in Madison Being Demolished," *Greensboro* (NC) *Record*, July 27, 1935, 2; Charles Rodenbough and Jean Rodenbough, *Town of Madison: A Heritage to Honor*, 1818-1968 (Madison, NC: Madison Sesquicentennial Commission, Inc., 1968), 17, 5, DigitalNC, https://library.digitalnc.org/cdm/ref/collection/booklets/id/45694.

appeared in a recent well-known textbook: "On January 20, 1840, the first public school in the state was opened in Rockingham County." The establishment of the school was later confirmed in deeds and common school records in the State Archives, and a historical highway marker was erected in the vicinity in 1990. Additional descriptions of the school came from the family history of George W. Garrett, whose relatives provided evidence passed down in their family that Garrett, a plantation owner near the Rockingham/Caswell line, provided the building and was the school's first teacher.[5]

These first public schools emerged in the context of North Carolina's early efforts to provide public education, led by judge and state legislator Archibald DeBow Murphey, who has become known as "the father of public education" in the state. Murphey had several connections to Rockingham County and today a main street through downtown Madison is named for him. As a lawyer and judge, Murphey did legal work in the area and was much admired by early leaders in Madison. Having visited the area seeking better health, Murphey bought property in Rockingham County in 1807—Rockingham Springs—a site popularly known for its mineral springs treatments. As a state legislator, Murphey anchored the debate about whether the general population should be educated,

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5 "Rockingham County and Common Schools," *North Carolina* (Raleigh, NC) *Standard*, February 12, 1840; Hugh Talmage Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome, eds., *The History of a Southern State: North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954, 1963, 1973), 368; "Site of First N.C. Public School Is Reported To Be in Rockingham County," *The Advisor*, January 1959, 18-19. North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, North Carolina Highway Historical Marker Program, http://www.ncmarkers.com/Markers.aspx?MarkerId=J-94; Vance Swift, "First Public Free School," *The State* 54, no. 8 (January 1987): 14-15. The 1840 announcement reported that the ten school supervisors were Thomas S. Gallaway, Nathan Wright, Thomas B. Wheeler, Robert W. Lawson, John L. Lesuers, Mecajah McGehee, Rawley Gallaway, E. T. Brodnax, Joel Fagg, and James Currie. The article praised these men for the "very able and zealous manner" in which they acted and gave credit to the surveyors, J. G. Wright and E. W. Hancock, for their work. In 1959, neither local historian Bettie Sue Gardner nor Rockingham County Superintendent Allan Lewis had heard of this claim, they told *The Advisor*, but both were enthusiastic about identifying the location of this school.

to what extent, and whether the state had responsibility for implementing public schools. This conversation went on in North Carolina from its early statehood and intensified in the 1820s and 1830s. Early support came from Governor James Turner, who called for a "general diffusion of learning" that would reach "into every corner of the State." Legislator John Walker of Warren County later gave a novel reason for expanding education: to keep North Carolinians from moving out of the state. If they had more access to schools, they would be less likely to migrate, he argued; "facility in education" would strengthen their ties to home.[6]

Overall, support for public education at this time was weak, but Murphey worked to convince his fellow legislators through his report on the status of education in 1817 that the state should be concerned about "thousands of unfortunate children" and "place them in schools where their minds can be enlightened and their hearts trained to virtue." One difficulty facing the extension of education to these students was the fact that 150,000 white children were spread all across the state at a ratio of about three pupils per square mile. As a result of the work of Murphey and others concerned about public education, however, thousands of these young people were reached in the next decades as the state assumed a role in public education. The Literary Fund was established in 1825 to help subsidize schools and the first state public school law was enacted in January 1839. Through these measures, North Carolinians laid the foundation for the expansion of education to a white population that at the time was approximately 27 percent

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6 Rodenbough, *Town of Madison*, 5; Butler, *Rockingham County*, 26; "History of Education in North Carolina," North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 1993, 8; Weeks, "Beginnings of the Common School System," 1400-1401. The quotation from Governor Turner comes from his message of November 21, 1804.

illiterate, the highest rate of any state in the nation. It was a system that provided a limited state commitment to education while ensuring local control of public schools.[7]

The first public school law in 1839 put the question very literally to a vote in each county: *"schools or no schools."* If the people voted for schools, they were agreeing not only to a tax to support them, but also to establish oversight through a group of county superintendents. These men would then direct a survey of the county and divide it into districts, identify all white school-aged children (ages five through twenty-one), find or build a suitable "school house," and then receive $40 from state funds for every $20 levied through taxes locally. When this process had been completed, "all white children were to be admitted without payment of any tuition whatever whether they were rich or poor." Nearly every county in the state promptly voted for schools, with Rockingham County being the first to vote in the affirmative *and* establish a school. The tally was 927 voting yes and 211 opposing. In only six years, every county had at least one public school, and by 1850, 2,657 common schools were operating in the state.[8]

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7 M. C. S. Noble, *A History of the Public Schools of North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1930), 56, 34, 46, 49; E. W. Knight, "Discussion of the January Lesson," *North Carolina Education*, February 1917, 13-14; Coon, *The Beginnings of Public Education*, xliv; Weeks, "Beginnings of the Common School System," 1404, 1415, 1423; Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 455. In its early years, monies for the Literary Fund came from a federal surplus divided among the states and from state investments in infrastructure, including dividends from navigation companies. Thomas Settle, Sr., of Rockingham County, was also a member of Murphey's committee on education.

8 Coon, *The Beginnings of Public Education*, 910, xliv; Noble, *A History of the Public Schools,* 54; Weeks, "Beginnings of the Common School System," 1421-22; "History of Education in North Carolina," North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction, 8. Tally of the vote on the school law was reported in the *Raleigh* (NC) *Register*, August 17, 1839. Perhaps the availability of the George Garrett school house already built on his plantation and his role as the first teacher made it possible for this Rockingham County "first."

Because the common schools system under this plan was almost entirely under local management, regular reports were not made to the state and growth was haphazard. There was no state official overseeing the system who might attempt to travel to the more than twelve hundred districts that were created in just a few years' time. The Rockingham County school chairman did report, however, in 1848 that the county had defined and established thirty-five school districts with a staff of thirty-nine teachers, who taught on average a term of five months. The teachers included one female, Isabella M. Harris. Although the county employed three dozen teachers in this first decade, one of the obstacles faced by common schools statewide was the lack of teachers. When Calvin Wiley became state superintendent in the 1850s, he implemented a certification plan, but these certificates were left to county school leaders to issue after administering examinations. Teachers were approved by local committees if they were found to be of good moral character and had "sufficient qualifications for teaching." These qualifications, however, were not specified by the state, and certificates were only good in the county of issuance. Still, access to education grew among whites where their community leaders were committed to providing it. Over the decade from 1840-1850, the white population of North Carolina grew by about 12 percent. During that time the number of students in all the common schools increased about 500 percent, from 19,483 to more than 100,000, with the average school term lasting about four months. By 1859, the rate of illiteracy among whites in North Carolina was down to 11 percent.[9]

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9 Noble, *A History of the Public Schools*, 85, 125; Butler, *Rockingham County*, 45; "History of Education in North Carolina," North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction, 9; Weeks, "Beginnings of the Common School System," 1423, 1425, 1434-35; Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 455. Weeks

While free public schooling spread for white children, even for some from poorer families in the twenty years before the Civil War, teaching African Americans to read and write was prohibited by law in nearly every Southern state. In North Carolina, an 1831 statute made the prohibition clear: "That any free person, who shall hereafter teach or attempt to teach, any slave within this State to read or write, the use of figures excepted, or shall give or sell to such slave or slaves any books or pamphlets, shall be liable to indictment." Whites who violated this law could be fined between $100 and $200 or imprisoned, while free persons of color who attempted to teach slaves would be imprisoned, fined, or "whipped . . . not exceeding thirty-nine lashes." A slave who taught other slaves would receive the thirty-nine lashes "on his or her bare back." Despite petitions from the Society of Friends to repeal these laws and, in fact, encourage the education of slaves, schooling for blacks in North Carolina remained, as Heather A. Williams has shown in her study of African American education in slavery and freedom, a matter of secretly learning and self-teaching when possible. Beginning in 1842, free blacks no longer were taxed to support schools, since, as the legislative sponsor noted, a black man, even of free status, "could never send his child to a common school." These laws applied to a state population that was 36 percent black in 1840 as the common schools were being opened to white students. About this same time, the racial make-up of Rockingham County closely mirrored these percentages, with a population that was about 60 percent white and 40 percent black in 1850.[10]

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reports that the white population of the state in 1840 was 484,870, while enslaved blacks numbered 245,817, and free blacks 22,732.

10 James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 2. "Chapter VI, An Act To Prevent all persons from teaching slaves To

Civil War and Reconstruction—Racial Politics and the Schools

Rockingham County was not representative of the Old South of American public memory, full of plantations with white-columned big houses and hundreds of enslaved laborers working the fields. Like the rest of the Piedmont area of North Carolina, Rockingham County was, nevertheless, a slave society. At the time of the Civil War, the overall population of Rockingham County was 16,746, with 40 percent of its residents African American—6,318 slaves and 409 free blacks. Most of the farmers in the county owned few or no slaves, and yet there were a number of large farms owned by slaveholders. When the question of secession had to be confronted, there was a definite Unionist feeling among many of the county's leadership, but after the call by President Lincoln for volunteers, one soldier remembered, "The fife and drum could be heard in every town and at every crossroads in Rockingham county." Numa F. Reid, the founder of an antebellum academy, reflected the general feeling of many of Rockingham County's soldiers when he said, "We must either fight our own Governor and State authorities or fight President Lincoln, and we have chosen the latter." At the commemoration of Reidsville's Confederate monument in 1910, the community recorded

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Read or Write, the Use of Figures Excepted," *Acts Passed by the General Assembly of North Carolina*, [1830-1831], Laws of the State of North Carolina, State Archives of North Carolina, 15, http://digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm/ref/collection/p249901coll22/id/175790; Coon, *The Beginnings of Public Education*, 675; On the nature of African American learning during slavery, see Heather Andrea Williams, *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Noble, *A History of the Public Schools*, 84; Weeks, "Beginnings of the Common School System," 1422-23; Butler, *Rockingham County*, 39. As Butler notes, the total population of Rockingham County in 1850 was 14,495, with 8787 whites, 5329 slaves, and 419 free blacks. Coon includes the "Petition of the Religious Society of Friends, convened at New Garden, in Guilford County, North Carolina, in the Eleventh month, 1834," in which the Quakers asked for repeal of the prohibition of educating slaves on the basis that they might then read the scriptures and allow them to improve their character. See Anderson for a comprehensive study of black education from Reconstruction to the Great Depression.

that they had constructed the statue of a single soldier to represent the 1,711 men from Rockingham County who had "marched to meet an army of armed invaders." The county did not see fighting within its borders but did suffer during the war from shortages and the loss of loved ones, at least six hundred local soldiers dying in the conflict.[11]

As for most of the American South, the legacy of slavery and the Civil War determined much of the racial politics of Rockingham County, North Carolina, and consequently, the development of schools as well. For white students, the Civil War effectively halted common school efforts and disrupted their schooling. At the start of the war, as historian Richard L. Zuber and other scholars have noted, North Carolina probably had the "best system of public schools in South." The common schools had gotten much of their financing from the Literary Fund, whose assets during the war were largely invested in state and Confederate bonds—funds practically wiped out after the South's defeat. As a result, by the end of the war there was not enough money to support a state system of public education, and by 1865, only a "handful" of schools operated in the state. As North Carolina emerged from war, about 330,000 children of school age lived in the state, approximately 68 percent of whom were white. Citing a lack of funds and an inability to tax the state's poor citizens, the General Assembly voted in March 1866 to abolish the common schools program. Governor Jonathan Worth and other political figures, however, acknowledged that attitudes about race were also a factor. If the state were to "educate white children at public expence," he wrote, "we will be

11 Butler, *Rockingham County,* 39; Bob Carter, phone conversation with author, July 3, 2018. For Numa F. Reid quotation and observation from R. S. Williams on the energy among volunteers in 1861, see Butler, 51, 55. County historian Carter estimates that of the 1800 soldiers from Rockingham County who served in the Civil War, 601 died.

required to educate negroes in like manner." The next year, however, the state legislature allowed municipalities to tax white adult males and set up public schools for whites within their town limits.[12]

For African Americans, because of the prohibition of state law and the entrenchment of local custom, education was through self-teaching or was nearly nonexistent before, during, and just after the Civil War. Suddenly, upon emancipation, however, as famed educator and African American spokesman Booker T. Washington noted, "It was a whole race trying to go to school." Heather A. Williams affirms this description of "blacks' intense desire to learn" and credits their determination with the eventual building of an educational system in the South that benefited both races. The main institutions establishing schools in North Carolina during these post-war years were the Freedmen's Bureau, which operated for about three years until it was dismantled in late 1868, and a number of religious groups. Altogether, these schools taught about 20,000 students—sometimes three generations in one classroom. In the eastern areas of the state that had been under early Union control during the war, schools for black students thrived, with some in the cities enrolling more than two hundred pupils each. African Americans actively participated in the development of schools in this era but faced challenges in maintaining them. As involvement by Northern denominational and

12 Richard L. Zuber, *North Carolina During Reconstruction* (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, 1969, 1996), 59; "History of Education in North Carolina," North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction, 10; "Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of North Carolina, for the Year 1869" (Raleigh: M. S. Littlefield, State Printer and Bincer, 1869), 2. *Documenting the American South*, https://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/report1869/menu.html; Roberta Sue Alexander, "Hostility and Hope: Black Education in North Carolina during Presidential Reconstruction, 1865-1867," *North Carolina Historical Review* 53, no. 2 (April 1976): 122.

philanthropic interests decreased, freedmen were often able to build or gain access to meeting places but were at the same time often unable to obtain and pay teachers. James W. Hood, a black minister of the African Episcopal Methodist Zion Church, served as an agent of the state and attempted to assess black education in 1869. He faced difficulty in traveling by rail and stage and so was unable to visit all the schools as he had hoped, but he found that nearly twelve thousand black pupils were being taught across the state. He also observed dedicated teachers and students in both the missionary schools and in those initiated by the freedmen themselves. Such schools, he reported, were sometimes merely "rough shanties" and "but a small improvement on being out of doors," but the freedmen were so "anxious to have schools for their children" that they had put up "such buildings as they feel able to erect." Although the Freedmen's Bureau set up 250 schools in the state and another 150 were initiated by church-related groups, such as the American Missionary Association, no schools for African Americans were recorded as having been opened in Rockingham County during the years of Presidential Reconstruction, 1865-1867. Still, there may have been efforts to provide education for black students locally, for as Hood found in his travels, schools were "scattered over all parts of the State, except beyond the Blue Ridge."[13]

In addition to efforts by religious groups and federal agencies, a number of local white Republicans worked with newly emancipated slaves in the war's aftermath to deal

13 Booker T. Washington quoted in Anderson, *The Education of Blacks*, 5; Williams, *Self-Taught*, 40; Zuber, *North Carolina During Reconstruction*, 6, 62; Alexander, "Hostility and Hope," 123; "Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of North Carolina, for the Year 1869," 16, 21, 24, 25. As both scholars Anderson and Williams have shown, many African Americans were "self-taught" and saw education as an assertion of freedom.

with the multitude of issues facing the defeated South. An advertisement for the *North Carolina Standard,* an "unmistakably loyal" newspaper allied with Governor William W. Holden, probably stated the views of the state's white Republicans most aptly: They were "in favor of the RESTORATION OF THE UNION" and wanted a "loyal civil government which . . . [would] protect the lives and property of all, and do justice to all." Perhaps the most prominent Rockingham County leader of the time was Judge Thomas Settle, Jr., who, despite his speech rallying local volunteers in April 1861 and a year of service in the Confederate army, emerged as a leader in the Republican Party and the primary voice for acceptance of Union victory and new roles for black citizens in postwar society. In what has become known as the "Spring Garden speech," Settle acknowledged his change of heart and claimed that, having been convinced of his error, he was doing the manly thing by publicly stating and explaining his views. Speaking to a biracial group of "neighbors and friends" gathered near his home, Settle set forth the circumstances facing the South as he saw them and offered practical ways forward.[14]

"This is a novel scene in Rockingham," Settle began. "You who were lately slaves, and you, who but lately owned them, are here today equals before the law" and

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14 Levi Branson, *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory*, [1867-1869], LXXXVIII, Digital NC, North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC. https://library.digitalnc.org/cdm/ref/collection/dirnc/id/973; Butler, *Rockingham County*, 51; Jeffrey J. Crow, "Thomas Settle, Jr., Reconstruction, and the Memory of the Civil War," *Journal of Southern History* 62, no. 4 (November 1996): 694; Thomas Settle, Jr., "1867 Spring Garden Political Speech," Folder 27, Boyd-Settle Collection, Rockingham Community College Historical Collections, Gerald B. James Library, Wentworth, North Carolina; Bob Carter, phone interview with author, May 30, 2018. For analysis of the Reconstruction era, see the seminal work of Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2014) and Allen W. Trelease, "Reconstruction: The Halfway Revolution," in *The North Carolina Experience*, eds. Lindley S. Butler and Alan D. Watson (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 285-307. Settle's 1867 speech was probably named for the area where he spoke near the site of the Spring Garden Presbyterian Church, according to Rockingham County historian, Bob Carter.

should join together. There was nothing he would argue to one race that he would not say to the other. "Your rights and duties are mutual," Settle declared, "and the sooner you understand them, the better for both." He stated clearly what he deemed to have been the cause of the war—to break away and establish "the richest and most powerful government on earth, upon the foundation of slavery." Arguing that "instead of perpetuating and extending slavery," as its initiators had intended, Settle stated bluntly that the outcome of the war killed the institution. "It is dead forever," he said, and its demise was best for all.[15]

Settle spoke to the economic realities facing his Rockingham County neighbors, both black and white. To the freedmen, Settle advised them not to expect confiscation and redistribution of land—that was not going to happen. He realized, he told them, "you want land and you want it cheap." It could be had readily, he explained, for "a large majority of whites . . . are sinking under the weight of indebtedness." "Then save your money and buy land," he suggested. No doubt surprising all, he urged his neighbors to stop denouncing the Yankees. "I tell you," he said, "Yankee notions are just what we want in this country." The North, "covered . . . with railroads and canals," had flourished since it "had the good sense" to get rid of slavery. Some of their "educated labor and machinery," as well as their investment in industry, were exactly what the South needed. The most practical, and ethical, path to take, urged Settle, would be to comply with Congressional mandates, rejoin the Union as quickly as possible, and work with the newly established Republican Party in the state, men who had already shown

15 Settle, "1867 Spring Garden Political Speech."

magnanimity to rebels and were "trying to pull down none, but to elevate all." "We want no white man's party or colored man's party, but a party of principle," he told the crowd. "There is no reason why the two races should be at enmity," Settle asserted. "My advice to the white man is to be kind and just to the colored man, make fair and liberal contracts with him, . . . and it is precisely the same to the colored man." With members of both races, these matters could be guided by the newly organized Republicans. Settle even couched the potential of the Republican Party in Biblical terms. It would be "madness and folly" to oppose the Congressional reconstruction plans, he argued. Besides, he concluded, the "Republican Party was the instrument in the hands of Providence to make all men free; for which the white and colored man ought to rejoice together, for they are both greatly benefited."[16]

Some of Settle's ideas about bringing together black and white men seemed to happen for a very brief time during Congressional Reconstruction, no more than about three years, as African Americans participated in the politics of the area. With the advent of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, black males played a significant role in Rockingham County politics. The voter rolls in Rockingham County listed 1,405 whites and 1,349 blacks in 1869, a quite close balance of the races in voting power. Also, African Americans were represented on the first postbellum Board of County Commissioners, when black teacher Robert Gwynn served alongside four white men, who had been elected as directed by the new 1868 North Carolina Constitution by a vote of the people, rather than being appointed by the legislature. These five, however, served

16 Settle, "1867 Spring Garden Political Speech."

only one term, 1868-1870, when state government was led by Republicans. Their names never again appeared as county commissioners, as those repeatedly did who were named by Democrats (Conservatives) after voters "redeemed" state and local government for the "white man's party."[17]

The circumstances of a war-weary Rockingham County during Reconstruction were much more contentious and significantly more violent than public memory of this era would indicate. Although nearby counties saw even more numerous serious racial attacks by the Ku Klux Klan against blacks and their white Republican supporters, including those resulting in the murders of black leader Wyatt Outlaw in Alamance and white Republican state senator John Walter Stephens in Caswell, there were at least sixty-two of these "outrages" recorded by the court clerk in Rockingham County. In May 1869, there were reports that beatings of blacks had been going on for at least a month. Historian Allen W. Trelease recorded graphic descriptions of two of these reported crimes in *White Terror*, his seminal work on the campaign of violence of the Ku Klux Klan and other similar groups in the South during Reconstruction. In one case, Klansmen brutally whipped a black man, while forcing him to feign sexual intercourse with a black girl in the presence of her father. Another gruesome example of Klan violence in the county

17 Branson, *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory*, [1867-1869], 135; Michael Perdue, "Historical Sketch of Rockingham County Government," and "Directory of Officials of Rockingham County, North Carolina 1786-1991," *Journal of Rockingham County History and Genealogy* 16 (December 1991): 75, 51-52, 53-89. The other members who served with Robert Gwynn on the first Board of Commissioners after the war were William F. Windsor, John H. French, Charles Williams, and Zach Groom, chairman; "Large Crowds Hear Aycock: Two Splendid Speeches in Support of the Constitutional Amendment," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, May 18, 1900, 2; At a speech in Rockingham County in 1900, gubernatorial candidate Charles Aycock called on his large audience to vote for the disfranchisement of black men and to support the Democrats, "the white man's party."

occurred when a firebrand was forced down the throat of a black woman who had screamed as they held her husband at gunpoint. Judge Thomas Settle, Jr., was painfully aware of this violence as he handled these cases and tried to stop the attacks by charging the suspects with crimes. In this attempt to protect black citizens and bring the Klansmen to trial, he worked in cooperation with another key white Republican, Judge Albion W. Tourgée of Guilford County, the noted jurist and author. In mid-1869, Settle wrote to Tourgée that since the last court session in Rockingham, "Men in disguise, at night, . . . [had] inflicted cruel whippings upon several of our colored citizens." The violence was "simply intolerable," Settle wrote, "and must be stopped." Just after the murder by the KKK of colleague John W. Stephens in the Yanceyville courthouse, Judge Tourgée wrote to North Carolina's Senator, Joseph C. Abbott. In the passionate letter, Tourgée detailed twelve murders and a thousand "outrages" by the Klan against African Americans and white Republicans in his district over recent months. He related numerous cases of those "scarred, mangled, and bruised" by Klan violence and pleaded with the Senator for federal investigation and military intervention against them. Tourgée's awareness of the danger was keen. "I have very little doubt that I shall be one of the next victims," he wrote Abbott. When the letter was published without Tourgée's consent in a New York newspaper in August 1870, the risk increased for the judge, his colleagues such as Settle, and their families.[18]

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18 Allen W. Trelease, *White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1971), 192, 195; Letter from Thomas Settle, Jr. to Albion W. Tourgée, May 12, 1869," Reel 9, Item 1472-L74, Albion W. Tourgée Papers, Microfilm, University of North Carolina at Greensboro; "Justice Albion W. Tourgée to Senator Joseph C. Abbott, May 24, 1870," *New York Tribune*, August 3, 1870, in *Undaunted Radical: The Selected Writings and Speeches of Albion W.*

Both judges were threatened with violence themselves and were dismayed when none of the twenty Klansmen charged in Rockingham County were convicted. Later, Tourgée referenced many of these tense moments dealing with the Klan in his novels based on his experiences in North Carolina during Reconstruction. In *A Fool's Errand, by One of the Fools*, the judge dedicated an entire chapter to an incident of threatened Klan violence against his characters, Colonel Servosse and Judge Denton, thinly disguised versions of himself and Settle. They are saved from certain attack by the brave actions of Servosse's daughter when she fortuitously overhears about the plot to murder the "Rockford County" judge and rides on horseback to warn him and her father before they leave the train station in "Glenville" and take the "river-road" home. The continued threats of violence, not only against area blacks, but personally against Settle and Tourgée as well, took a toll on the judges and their families, so much so that both began to consider how they might remove themselves from the danger. They corresponded in the summer of 1869 about the increasing danger they sensed as charges were being prepared against the Klansmen. Tourgée wrote that since calling the Grand Jury, he had been "looking around ever since" in fear. "Thing are in a bad situation—very bad," he wrote Settle. "Our friends here are the worst frightened" they have ever been, "actually scared out of their wits," he wrote. He asked Settle to contact Governor Holden and ask for protection, to be ready to send "25 men at a minute's warning." Still, Tourgée felt that they must go on with the prosecution of the KKK, as it was their "only chance to avoid a

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Tourgée, eds. Mark Elliott and John David Smith (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press), 47-51.

widespread and bloody turmoil." The following year Settle commiserated with Tourgée about the KKK threats they both had suffered and praised his colleague and friend for trying to stop the Klan. "[Y]ou have stood up like a hero," Settle wrote, but said that he understood if Tourgée wanted to "be removed temporarily, at least, from the incessant persecution."[19]

Ultimately, Tourgée looked abroad for a haven and shared his thoughts with Settle. He mentioned in a letter marked "Private and Confidential" that he contemplated getting an appointment to a consulate somewhere for "a year or two," preferably in South America because he was "proficient in Spanish." This plan likely became more urgent after Tourgée's letter to Senator Abbott was printed without his permission in the *New York Tribune*. In September 1870, Tourgée informed Settle that he sought a specific position, one vacant in the "Chilian mission," and that he desired "to leave the State for a time." "I think this state is fairly entitled to one decent foreign appointment," he wrote Settle. Not long after, it was Settle, not Tourgée, who obtained an ambassadorship—to Peru instead of Chile—and clearly for the same reason—to escape the dangers of KKK persecution. Both Settle's daughter and wife wrote him during his one-year stay in Peru,

19 Butler, *Rockingham County*, 57; Albion W. Tourgée, *A Fool's Errand, by One of the Fools (*London: George Routledge and Sons, 1883), 212, 219, 220; Letter from Albion W. Tourgée to Thomas Settle, Jr., June 24, 1869, Folder 4, Thomas Settle, Jr. Papers, Southern Historical Collections, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Letter from Thomas Settle, Jr. to Albion W. Tourgée, September 7, 1870, Reel 9, Item 1472-168, Albion W. Tourgée Papers, Microfilm, University of North Carolina at Greensboro. In *A Fool's Errand*, "Rockford County" seems clearly to be Rockingham County and "Glenville" the substitute for Reidsville. As described in the novel's Chapter XXXVI, "A Race Against Time," Settle did, indeed, live on a "river-road" in between Madison and Wentworth, just a few miles from the train stop in Reidsville.

suggesting that because of his role in accepting of African Americans and supporting them in court, threats still lingered against him and his family.[20]

Upon his return to North Carolina, Settle remained active in the Republican Party, presiding at the 1872 national convention and running a close campaign for governor against Zebulon B. Vance in 1876. He then spent the rest of his career as a federal judge in Florida. At his death in 1888, Settle was remembered in a Greensboro newspaper as one who might have continued his work "in allaying the bitterness of sectional and partisan animosities" and was called "probably the foremost man of his party in the South." He certainly did provide leadership to his native area in a time of great change and turmoil; it was a loss to Rockingham County that Settle felt he had to leave the area for safety and opportunity because of the Klan terror of 1868-1870 and following the resurgence of Democratic control at the state level.[21]

For the brief time Republicans directed the state government, however, they produced a quite progressive state constitution and had a positive effect in determining

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20 Letter from Thomas Settle, Jr. to Albion W. Tourgée, August 1870, Reel 10, Item 1575-L116-117, Albion W. Tourgée Papers, Microfilm, University of North Carolina at Greensboro; Letter from Thomas Settle, Jr. to Albion W. Tourgée, August 30, 1870, Reel 10, Item 1575-L121-122, Albion W. Tourgée Papers, Microfilm, University of North Carolina at Greensboro; Letter from Nettie Settle to Thomas Settle, Jr., November 15, 1871, Boyd-Settle Collection, Folder 26, Rockingham Community College Historical Collections, Gerald B. James Library, Wentworth, North Carolina; Letter from Mary Settle to Thomas Settle, Jr., June 25, 1871, Mulberry Island (Wentworth) to Lima, Peru, Thomas Settle Jr. Papers, Folder 5, Southern Historical Collections, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Tourgée complained in the August 30, 1870 letter that not only Senator Joseph Abbott, but also Governor William Holden had played a role in the "breach" and release of his private letter containing so many detailed accusations of Klan violence. Daughter Nettie wrote her father describing a frightening incident involving a newly hired hand, Luther Low, who was stopped by "some men camping at the bridge" and peppered with questions about Judge Settle's whereabouts. Wife Mary wrote that she hoped this move to Peru was "all for the best" and that she would not wish him home "in all this strife for anything."

21 Butler, *Rockingham County,* 57; "Death of Hon. Thomas Settle," *Greensboro* (NC) *North State*, December 6, 1888.

the trajectory of the state for the next three decades. Because Republican leaders gave a serious effort to reviving public schools, the area of greatest long-term Republican influence may have been in education. In August 1867, Thomas Settle, Jr., had expressed the foundation of the Republican plans for improvement in North Carolina. "I tell you frankly," he said, "we must make up our minds to look at several things in a different light from that in which we have been in the habit of viewing them." Especially regarding education for African Americans, he argued, "We must bury a thousand fathoms deep all those ideas and feelings that prompted those cruel laws against teaching these people, and must see that the means of light and knowledge are placed within the reach of every one of them." He urged, "Let school houses dot our hills at convenient distances from all." The 1868 North Carolina Constitution, written at what one historian has called "one of the most important gatherings in the history of the state," was the means of instituting this educational change. A very progressive document overall, the new constitution was crafted by a convention of 120 men, 107 of whom were Republicans who supported Congressional Reconstruction measures. Representing Rockingham County were Henry Barnes and John French, who had far outpolled other local candidates in the vote to be delegates to the Constitutional Convention. In a revolutionary circumstance for the state, 15 of the delegates were African American.[22]

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22 Settle, "1867 Spring Garden Political Speech"; *Journal of the Constitutional Convention of the State of North Carolina, at Its Session 1868* (Raleigh: Joseph W. Holden, Convention Printer, 1868), 104, Electronic Edition, *Documenting the American South*, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/conv1868/menu.html; Butler, *Rockingham County,* 55-56; Zuber, *North Carolina During Reconstruction*, 14. Convention documents record that Barnes received 756 votes and French 741. Others receiving votes were George W. Griffin, 308, William N. Hereford, 140, and Jones W. Burton, 70. Butler notes that Thomas Settle, Jr., had represented Rockingham County, along with Robert H. Ward, an attorney and publisher from Leaksville, at the 1865-66 state

Those resistant to racial change offered a number of amendments. The first, that "no person of African descent or of mixed blood, shall be eligible to the office of Governor, Lieutenant Governor, or any other Executive office," was soundly voted down. The next proposed by the same delegate, "The Caucassian [sic] and African races are distinct by nature, and color; therefore, all intermarriages between the . . . white race, and the African or black race are forever prohibited" was also rejected. Two members offered amendments, also rejected, to the education sections that would have mandated "that there shall be separate and distinct schools and Colleges for the white and colored races." Despite these efforts to maintain racial restrictions, the final Constitution contained no sections that called for racial segregation in schools or limitations on black male political participation. The new document established suffrage for all males of voting age regardless of race and called for "a general uniform system of Public Schools" for "all the children of the State between the ages of six and twenty-one," both black and white, for a term of at least four months yearly. The 1868 Constitution also placed strong expectations on county commissioners and local school committees to be accountable for their schools. County officials who failed to comply with the directives to establish districts and school houses would be "liable to indictment." Only in 1875, after the state government was "redeemed" by Democrats would racial segregation in the schools be required by state law, with an amendment to the state constitution that "the children of the white race and the children of the colored race shall be taught in separate public schools."

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convention. Settle, however, was not directly involved in writing the 1868 Constitution. Albion W. Tourgée was one of the two representatives from Guilford County and was extremely active in writing and influencing large portions of the new document.

"The school law is not in all respects perfect," one editorial from the Republican *Raleigh Standard* read, "but it is the commencement of a republican system of free education which will send the light of knowledge streaming through the minds of all the children of the old North State."[23]

In his work on black education in the South, James D. Anderson argued that two paths of education—one to prepare students for democratic participation and the other "schooling for second-class citizenship"—have existed in American society simultaneously. While white children were educated in order to enable them to function as good citizens, Anderson asserted, African American children were first prohibited education as a means of control and later provided only a limited access to schooling to train them for practical labor. In the Rockingham County area, black citizens over time certainly faced some of these restrictions, especially during the Jim Crow era. In the early years after emancipation, however, they generally worked with school leaders within the existing circumstances to create educational spaces for their children that went beyond the limitations described by Anderson. An important impetus for this advancement was the emphasis Reconstruction Republicans placed on expanding schooling, and even achieving "universal education," during the few years they had

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23 *Journal of the Constitutional Convention of the State of North Carolina, at Its Session 1868,* 162, 216, 342, 343; Trelease, "Reconstruction: The Halfway Revolution," 291; "Article IX, Education," Constitution of North Carolina of 1868, *North Carolina Constitutions*, North Carolina Legislative Library, 863, https://www.ncleg.net/library/Documents/Constitution_1868.pdf; "An Ordinance to Amend Section Two, Article Nine, of the Constitution," Amendments of 1875, *North Carolina Constitutions*, North Carolina Legislative Library, 883, https://www.ncleg.net/library/Documents/Amdts_1875.pdf; "The Republicans View Their Legislative Record, 1868-1869," in *The North Carolina Experience*, eds. Butler and Watson, 301. Original editorial from the *Raleigh* (NC) *Daily Standard*, April 16, 1869.

control of state government in the 1860s. In fact, as noted by several historians, in the post-Civil War decades, some African American children had opportunities for schooling similar and at times better than their white neighbors. This situation existed for the African Americans of Rockingham County. Large numbers of youth, white and black, needed basic educations, and this form of education was provided to both races, in small, simple school houses. As soon as educational districts were drawn in the 1870s, many black children were educated in buildings that looked very similar to those used by white pupils and were trained in many of the same skills and content. Over three decades, public education slowly emerged and expanded for both races, as community leaders realized that the system had to be "worked out locally," literally in every district of the county.[24]

The post-Civil War public school system in Rockingham County was first established in 1877, according to what the five-man school board, with A. J. Ellington as chairman, understood to be the "requirements of the new school law." One of the greatest challenges in the 1870s was getting organized, considering the slowness of communication possible among the county's citizens. Initially, the board laid out the county into the same thirty-six districts that had existed before the war, selected three

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24 Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South*, 1; On black education during Reconstruction, see in addition to Anderson and Williams already cited, Robert C. Morris, *Reading, 'Riting, and Reconstruction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, "Educational Capital and Human Flourishing: North Carolina's Public Schools and Universities, 1865-2015," in *New Voyages to Carolina: Reinterpreting North Carolina History*, eds. Larry E. Tise and Jeffrey J. Crow (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 194-216; and John E. Batchelor, *Race and Education in North Carolina: From Segregation to Desegregation* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2015), 14, ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uncg/detail.action?docID=4103739; Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, 1877-1885, archived at Central Office of Rockingham County Schools, Harrington Highway, Eden, North Carolina.

school committeemen for each, and then sent a professionally printed circular letter to all involved, informing them of their appointment and responsibilities. They were to report to the nearest magistrate on a specific date and be sworn in. To be clear, the board included a copy of the aforementioned school law, which they directed each committee member to read with care, as well as deed descriptions for each district, all filled with property owners' names and identifying markers such as "running through the widow Flack's yard" (District 1), "at Bradsher's old place" (District 10), and "at the double ash tree in Carroll's field" (District 6). School districts were identified by number and sometimes also by location of schools, ("School House at Mizpah Church," for instance), as structures were built, reclaimed, or obtained for classes. A crucial part of each committee's task was to take a census of their district and identify all eligible school-aged citizens, those between the ages of six and twenty-one. "Please see to it that the census is *actually* and *accurately* taken," the board advised, and that the results were sent promptly to the county Register of Deeds. This account had to be made before any teaching was done or funds were distributed to pay teachers. The first census recorded in September 1877 identified 6,145 potential students, about 61 percent white and 39 percent black. This racial make-up of the school population remained steady in the next two years and beyond, with 62 percent white in the censuses of 1878 and 1879. In eight districts, African Americans outnumbered or were roughly equal in number to whites. An additional district, Number 37, was drawn in October 1877, with an all-white census population of 47 eligible students added to the rosters. Within a few months, thirty-four

schools for whites and fourteen for blacks were operating, many, no doubt, in readily available structures or in teachers' homes.[25]

From the beginning, the county board found itself dealing with a number of administrative concerns. One task was identifying and replacing members of the school committees, a constant demand on the board's time, which started right away in September 1877 with five members in five different districts. The board oversaw around 120 other men in this effort, some of whom may have declined the position when they realized the expectations and many others who moved out of the district, had other obligations, or simply had no interest in the endeavor. The flow of committeemen in and out of the system and the need for replacements were constant. District boundary lines were also sometimes confusing and contested. In early 1878, District 33 was divided into three separate districts, and instructions were given that students in another part of the county "be allowed to attend the School of their choice." When district lines were altered, the distribution of funds was also sometimes in question as well, making for a more complicated system. Although figures for some districts seem to be outliers, over several years, apportionment of funds for teacher pay was roughly equal for whites and blacks, at about one dollar per child. Any designated funds for a district which were not paid out to teachers and left over were transferred to that district's allotment for the next term.[26]

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25 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, July 30, 1877; September 1, 1877; October 1, 1877; September 1, 1878; and September 1, 1879. The members of this first post-war school board were John N. Irvin, E. D. Paschal, James A. Vernon, A. F. Neal, and A. J. Ellington, chairman.

26 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, September 1, 1877; January 9, 1878; February 11, 1878; March 4, 1878; August 5, 1878; September 1, 1879; December 1, 1879; February 2, 1880; August 2, 1880; September 6, 1880; October 4, 1880; December 6, 1880; and April 4, 1881.

The primary difficulty faced in establishing a public school system for the county was in building and staffing schools where there were none, a responsibility that was assigned to the district committees. After a census had been made of the number of potential students, the committeemen in districts where schools had not yet been established were expected to meet the mandate that they provide at least one school for each race, presumably placing buildings in areas where there were the most pupils. In practice, the district committee was obligated either to open schools in existing structures, or to obtain land for the needed schools, either by gift or purchase, gather the funds, and construct a building. Some of the expense of buying land and building schools was reimbursed by the county. Although the construction costs seemed to vary from a few dollars to more than $150, in one district (#7) in 1881, the builder requested exactly $100 each for the two school houses built there, one for the "White Race" and the other for the "Colored Race." Unable or otherwise remiss in meeting these expectations, some committees appealed to the board that they could not find suitable land to begin the school building process. The response from the county leaders was consistently that they expected results, telling each group to locate and "lay off not more than one acre each for the white and colored races" in their district for school house sites. The board kept a close watch on the various districts, for example, in 1883 ordering District 12 to set up a second white school on the side of the district where it was needed. Most districts

eventually complied with the board's mandates, and the county had built schools in all of its forty-eight districts by 1884.[27]

A closer look at the Gwyn School in District 30 illuminates some of the issues in the early years of public education for African Americans. The family history of Robert Gwynn and the school where he taught in the 1870s and 1880s emphasized their ancestor's free status before the Civil War and his postwar accomplishments as a landowner, county commissioner, and educator. Family lore memorialized Gwynn as a "source of pride" and a "guiding light" in the schooling of black children in the Shiloh community in the north-central area of Rockingham County. By 1879, Gwynn owned property there, amassing nearly four hundred acres by the late 1880s. The local school committee obtained a one-fourth of an acre lot for the structure that became known as the Gwynn School, not from its namesake, but as a gift from James Thomas in 1879. The deed indicated that the lot, which bordered land owned by Robert Gwynn, was "for the purpose of a school house . . . for the benefit of the Colored children." Thomas was a white committeeman for District 30, a unit that had been ordered months earlier by the school board to fulfill its responsibilities and get a site for a school for black children and report back to them promptly. This mandate was repeatedly made to white committees remiss in establishing schools for both races in their districts. The school built in District 30 became known by Gwynn's name, as Robert Gwynn was its teacher, his name being included on numerous payment and certification lists in school board records.[28]

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27 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, March 7, 1881; September 5, 1881; November 7, 1881; November 30, 1881; October 2, 1883; and January 1, 1885.

28 Joann Marie Davis, "Robert Gwynn and Gwynn Colored School," and "Sarah Frances Ann Gwynn," in *The Heritage of Blacks in North Carolina, Volume I, 1990*, eds. Philip N. Henry and Carol M. Speas

When the county named its first school superintendent, N. S. Smith, in June 1881, a new emphasis on recruiting and training qualified teachers became the focus. District committees were now aided in identifying likely teachers for their schools by a leader who wrote in a report to his board, "If our common School System is to be built up, it must be done by our teachers." Although he recognized the role of "new and comfortable" buildings in improving schooling and the importance of blackboards in classrooms, an innovation that, before he had brought them to the county, had been "almost unknown in our public schools," Smith put teachers "trained for their work" as central to his goals. Textbooks had brought some uniformity and had enabled teachers to group students, resulting in quicker progress and more satisfied teachers, who before were "overworked and discouraged." Above all, he argued, what was needed to "raise the standard of scholarship among teachers" were training sessions for both white and black instructors. In his first year, the board had denied Smith funds for these summer training institutes, a circumstance he resented and even attempted to resign over, but in subsequent years, sessions were held for each race. In 1883, seventy-seven white teachers attended their institute, while fifty-two African Americans did so. At a two-week "Colored Teachers' Institute" held in June 1887, the Leaksville newspaper editor observed a high level of learning and a "thirst for knowledge" and deemed that "the

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(Charlotte, NC: The North Carolina African American Heritage Foundation, 1990), 247-48; Deed from James Thomas to School Committee of District No. 30, March 3, 1879, Deed Book 80 at page 504, Rockingham County Register of Deeds; Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, September 2, 1878; For other times committees were admonished to attend to their duties and establish schools in their districts, see Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, March 15, 1879; March 7, 1881; September 5, 1881; and November 7, 1881. In addition to a narrative passed down in her family, Davis notes that Gwynn was listed as "mulatto" in the 1880 census and provides evidence of her ancestor's involvement in Rockingham County life from deeds, school board minutes, and county records.

colored teachers of North Carolina are far in advance of their Virginia brethren." Sessions for fifty-four participants, "almost the entire colored teaching force of the county," were led by Superintendent Smith and other educational experts in studying "nearly everything pertaining to the curriculum of a public school." Two very optimistic letters from black teachers appeared in the newspaper after the sessions concluded. One from teacher James W. Poe praised Smith as a man "who has done so much for the colored people that he deserves their highest gratitude." He went on to express his hope that Smith would someday serve in the state legislature, where he could continue to improve educational laws. A second letter lauding the institute from participant J. M. R. Griffith hailed it as a life-altering experience. "I was never more profitably instructed in my life," he wrote. "The colored people of Rockingham should be very proud that they are citizens of that county" and that their leaders "wish to see the county on the high road of moral and educational developments." The teacher was so encouraged that he concluded, "The Sunny South is the place for the black man."[29]

The professional level of teaching in the county made steady progress in the last two decades of the 1800s. County teachers at the white schools had formed an association as early as 1882, when they met twice to support Superintendent Smith's call for summer training; African American teachers also formed their own educational organization with J. H. Morgan as president and E. F. Parham, as secretary.

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29 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, June 1, 1881; Superintendent's Report to the Board of Education of Rockingham County for the year ending 30th November 1882; Superintendent's Report to the Board of Education of Rockingham County, December 3, 1883; "The Colored Institute," *Dan Valley Echo* (Leaksville, NC), June 21, 1887; "The Colored Institute," *Dan Valley Echo* (Leaksville, NC), June 3, 1887; "Wants Him for the Legislature," *Dan Valley Echo* (Leaksville, NC), June 21, 1887; "The Colored Institute," *Dan Valley Echo* (Leaksville, NC), July 7, 1887.

Superintendent Smith pushed the county's teachers to achieve the highest level of certification, first grade, and instituted written exams instead of oral questions to verify each teacher's qualifications. Of the eighty-four teachers in the county at the end of 1883, seventy-one had achieved either first or second-level certificates, a circumstance that Superintendent Smith attributed in part to more young people entering the teaching profession and, of course, attendance at his training institutes. Only thirteen teachers remained at the lowest level of examination, twelve of them African American. Some of the longest-serving black teachers remained at this third level of certification even after many years in the classroom and opportunities to improve their status on the qualifying examinations. This discrepancy in certification levels may account for the difference in average teacher salaries, which in 1883 was $26.70 for white teachers and $21.68 for blacks.[30]

Differences in black and white public education began to emerge in the county in the 1880s. Percentages of enrollment were roughly equal, but unlike the organization of the schools only a few years earlier, identifiable black and white districts developed. Even though more than seventy-nine hundred eligible students, 58 percent white and 42 percent black, were identified in 1883, only about 44 percent of whites of school age and 45 percent of African American children were actually enrolled in Rockingham County public schools in the mid-1880s. There was a difference in length of the school term of two weeks, with the short 13 ½ weeks attended by black students partially explained by

30 "Colored Teachers Association," *Dan Valley Echo* (Leaksville, NC), August 18, 1887; Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, January 1, 1883; Superintendent's Report to the Board of Education of Rockingham County, December 3, 1883.

the bad weather of January and February that winter. Sixty-two county-built school houses dotted the countryside, with twenty-one of them for black students. Although the superintendent had "earnestly" recommended that there be "no further division of the Districts," by 1885 the number had grown to 48, with the Reidsville District 44 burgeoning with a total of 723 students, more than twice as large in student population as any other in the county. Six black districts were split off from their original units, with their own committees comprised of African Americans. Half of these were in Madison and Reidsville, where the black school-age populations were large in proportion to whites and where a legacy of strong African American schools carried over into later decades. The emergence of all-black districts was significant in that, apart from the educators themselves, these districts offered the first official recognition of local black leadership for the schools. Separate districts and committees might have meant more autonomy for blacks in oversight of their own schools, but at the same time, their existence could have also signaled that whites were no longer accepting responsibility for operating schools for African Americans. This breach would broaden as the twentieth century brought an intensification of white supremacy and Jim Crow practices.[31]

Some white enrollment may have been lost in the late nineteenth century to academies in the area. In the decades following the Civil War, in addition to the slowly emerging public school system, a number of options for private education in Rockingham County were also available to white students. Academies continued in Madison and

31 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, October 2, 1883; December 3, 1883; January 7, 1884; and December 3, 1884.

Leaksville, while new schools opened in the growing Reidsville area. Operated by Franklin B. Hobgood, a graduate of Wake Forest College, the Reidsville Male Academy, later advertised as the "Reidsville Classical and Mathematical School," opened in 1869. There, Hobgood, according to a biographer, worked for two years "preparing for college some of the most prominent men of the Piedmont region of his native state." In the 1870s, young men could also enroll at the tuition-based Reidsville High School, operated by Professor T. J. Norcom, where, according to an advertisement, they might become prepared for "commercial life" or be ready to enter "the junior class in college." A companion article noted that families had recently moved to Reidsville "to enjoy the advantages of this institution" and recounted the rigorous seven hours of examinations that Norcom's students had just completed. In addition, twenty weeks of instruction for "youth of both sexes" could be had from Mrs. Wooten "in the Western section of Reidsville" for only ten dollars in tuition. Mrs. Wooten advertised her school, touting her prior experience teaching in Charlotte and the references of patrons, which included a general, a colonel, a major, and two captains, presumably men of distinction in the recent war. Young women might also have entered the Select Boarding and Day School of Miss Emma Scales. Advertised as a "first-class" institution in a "healthy location," the school offered classes in "Higher English," French, Latin, and music but charged an extra $5.00 fee for using the school's piano. Miss Scales's school was later known as the Reidsville

Seminary for Girls and continued to flourish into the next century. Wray's School also operated in Reidsville in the 1880s.[32]

Reidsville's Growth and Establishment of a "City" School System

There were, as historians of Reconstruction North Carolina have pointed out, some significant business and industrial advances in the 1870s and 1880s, but the state remained largely an agricultural place, where the "sharecrop system soon evolved as the most practical for both landowners and laborers." Most Rockingham County residents, black and white, were farm families, trying to raise "corn, oats, wheat and hay," and most of all, tobacco. By 1900, more than seventeen thousand acres of tobacco were grown in the county. Many communities thrived because of the tobacco trade but none more than Reidsville. Spurred by tobacco and the railroad, which had been built during the Civil War and just after, the village of Reidsville began to grow in the 1870s, boasting at least two hundred and fifty people employed in factories making plug chewing tobacco in 1873. Indicative of increasing ties to travelers and businesses along the railway, two Reidsville hotels were advertised in the local newspaper in 1875, along with others in Richmond, Danville, and Baltimore. Two tobacco warehouses and ten prizeries, where "tobacco was crated or prized into large wooden hogsheads" for market, operated in

32 Robert W. Carter, Jr., "A Sketch of Reidsville, 1829-1894," *Journal of Rockingham County History and Genealogy* 18 (December 1993): 47, 49; *Biographical History of North Carolina from Colonial Times to the Present*, ed. Samuel A. Ashe, Volume IV (Greensboro, NC: Charles L. van Noppen Publisher, 1906), 191, Google e-books; Advertisement for the Reidsville & Mathematical School, *Greensborough* (NC) *Patriot*, January 6, 1870, 3; R. Hargus Taylor, "Franklin P. Hobgood," *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, ed. William S. Powell, Volume III, 154, Google e-books; "Ad for Mrs. Wooten's School," "Ad for Reidsville High School," and "Ad for "Select Boarding and Day School," all in *The* (Reidsville NC) *Enterprise*, January 2, 1875; Ad for Miss Emma Scales School, *Reidsville* (NC) *News Weekly*, March 3, 1877, Microfilm, Madison-Mayodan Public Library, Madison, North Carolina.

Reidsville in the early 1870s. The growth continued in the next two decades, with the population of Reidsville in 1890 being only 348 less than nearby Greensboro. Much of this increase was due to the availability of jobs in tobacco production and thriving commerce. By the 1890s, there were eleven different tobacco factories producing chewing and smoking tobacco products, and six million pounds of tobacco was sold in Reidsville warehouses. The significant growth of the tobacco industry in Reidsville made room for both black and white businesses and workers. One of the prizeries was owned by black businessman W. W. Davis and numerous skilled black laborers worked in Reidsville. An 1895 feature in the local newspaper on Reidsville businessmen, complete with commissioned etchings of their likenesses, included some African Americans. Those profiled, two barbers and a minister, were clearly accepted by the business and professional class of Reidsville but were not perceived as threatening competition for their white neighbors. The barbers, A. B. Broadnax and W. W. Reavis, were called "tonsorial artists" in the promotional article, in which their shop was noted as being "patronized by the elite of the town." Minister C. C. Somerville was praised as "a leader of his race" who had "the power of swaying his people with his words," and was "very deserving of recognition" in the newspaper's sketches of influential local men. Over time, black business districts developed in other towns of the county, beyond Reidsville. One especially flourishing area was in Madison where black commercial interests operated alongside white businesses on Murphey Street, one of the main streets. There, a blacksmith, clothes cleaners, shoe shop and cafe operated until a large fire destroyed many of these black-owned businesses in the 1920s. Strong black business foundations

suggested that Reidsville and Madison were particularly promising spaces for African Americans to live and work.[33]

Schools grew along with Reidsville's commerce. The first white schools in Reidsville began the same year the city was established—1873. Classes were held in several one or two-room buildings in different parts of town. In the 1870s and 1880s, just as in the other forty or so school districts in the county, three men were appointed by the county board as local committeemen to oversee the schools. The Reidsville area grew consistently during this time, and District 44, where most of its residents lived, was the largest school unit in the county with 374 white and 349 African American children in its census. In 1883, the county board approved a petition for a district two miles square, roughly the same area as that of the town limits of Reidsville, and set it off as a separate school district. Four years later, the town established its own school system. What became known as "city school systems" were originally called charter districts because they operated under a special charter issued by the state legislature and had funds from local taxes. In 1876, only one such district existed in the state, but by 1906, there were seventy-eight. In 1887, Reidsville was the ninth North Carolina town to establish its own school system apart from its county, the same year as Asheville. That same year, an

33 See Trelease, "Reconstruction: Halfway Revolution," 290 (quoted material), 285-307; Advertisements for hotels, *The* (Reidsville NC) *Enterprise*, January 2, 1875, Microfilm, Madison-Mayodan Public Library, Madison, North Carolina; Butler, *Rockingham County*, 57, 59; Carter, "A Sketch of Reidsville," 48, 50; *"Brace of Barbers," and "Clever Clergyman," Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, 1895; "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?" *Madison* (NC) *Sun*, January [Year Unknown], 1, 13, Newspaper Clipping files, Rockingham Community College Historical Collections, Gerald B. James Library, Wentworth, North Carolina. The original copy of the 1895 newspaper was badly torn and illegible in parts. Both barbers were referred to using the courtesy title "Prof." Much of the information in the *Sun* article was based on an interview of Miss Betsy Franklin, African American teacher and local historian.

eight-classroom graded school was built on Lindsay Street, and a chapel was added later. This facility was filled to capacity in just a few years. In Reidsville, a public school for black students also operated in the 1880s and was located on Harris Street. In 1887, when the public school district of Reidsville was made official, there were five teachers at the white school and four teachers for African Americans. Total enrollment increased from 444 in that year to more than 800 by the end of the century, when, to accommodate these numbers, two white schools and one for African Americans had been built, with a total of fifteen teachers. The Superintendent of the Reidsville Schools, Edwin S. Sheppe, was proud to report that, despite early "considerable opposition" by the "largest property owners" to the operation of schools at additional local expense, the schools had become "fixed institutions of the community" and were attracting students from significant distances away. Instruction had been organized in ten grade levels, students had access to a school library of "several hundred volumes," and a high school, presumably for whites, now offered preparation for college as well as practical study in such courses as "book-keeping and business practice." All students, not just "a few of the brightest pupils," presented "specimens of their regular work" at the year-end school exposition, which the superintendent argued made most students "careful to improve" with each assignment. Especially noteworthy was the debating program introduced by the superintendent four years earlier. All students above fifth grade were required to participate in the debates held every other week. They managed the debating societies themselves, investigated topics from history and current events, and developed their "power of thinking clearly upon any subject." A tenth-grade teacher went even further than Superintendent Sheppe

in claiming that her Reidsville Graded School in 1899, although not a "very imposing structure," was "in all the best school in the South." Although perhaps not as remarkable as this teacher declared them to be, ten years after their organization in Reidsville, these town public schools showed significant advances over their rural counterparts.[34]

County Schools in the 1890s

An 1898 state report including the Rockingham County schools revealed that incremental advances in providing wider access and improved education for both races had been made by the end of the century. Probably the area of most progress had been achieved in obtaining and certifying teachers. Frank Curtis, who conducted training institutes in the county in the summer of 1898 for both races, found the attendance "remarkably large." "I have nowhere seen more progressive and enthusiastic teachers than in this county," Curtis reported. Just as Superintendent N. S. Smith had advised a decade earlier, more qualified teachers had been secured and certified, with a marked increase in the number of females in the county teaching force. In the black schools, there were still more males teaching than women, but the gender gap was closer, with three dozen men and twenty-three women instructing African American pupils in the county. Of the eighty-six white teachers employed in the county's public schools,

34 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, November 30, 1883; and December 1, 1883; Charles L. Coon, *A Statistical Record of the Progress of Public Education in North Carolina, 1870-1906* (Raleigh: Office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1907), 5, 18; Carter, "A Sketch of Reidsville," 49; *Webster's Weekly*, September 20, 1887; "Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1898," Department of Public Instruction, Raleigh, North Carolina, 389, 390, NC Digital Collections, http://digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm/ref/collection/p249901coll22/id/434148; "A Model School," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, November 28, 1899, 2. As noted by Coon, Reidsville was preceded in the designation as a city or "charter" system by Greensboro in 1875; Raleigh, 1877; Salisbury 1880; Goldsboro,1881; Durham, Charlotte, and Wilmington 1882; and Winston in 1885.

seventy-one were female in 1898. One of these teachers, Alberta Ratliffe Craig, reflecting on her experiences in an 1890s classroom, recalled the Old Salem School about two miles west of Reidsville. Here she taught children from first through seventh grades in a one-room log cabin heated by "an immense open fireplace." The single "writing desk" was a "long polished board" all across the back of the room. Craig had been able to attend for two years the "school the great McIver had established at Greensboro called the Normal and Industrial School for Girls" but had run short of money and had found this position in the public schools of Rockingham County. After the four-month term finished at Salem, she taught in the Ruffin section of the county for the next two years, where she lived with relatives. Craig found the young people to be "congenial" and was impressed with the "fine riders" and fox chases there. The experiences of this young female teacher suggest increasing autonomy for young women like Craig, who could move to accept jobs that opened up as public schools across the area sought teachers with some professional training in education.[35]

In certification and salaries, Rockingham County teachers of both races compared favorably to others across the state as the century came to a close. After examination by local school officials, almost all white teachers earned the highest certificate level, "First Grade," in 1897, while nearly half of African American teachers tested at this standard. Only three black teachers were certified at the third, or lowest, level. Salaries were also comparable to teachers in other districts. Male and female teachers of each race were

35 "Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1898," 297, 367; Marjorie Craig, "Home Life in Rockingham County in the Eighties and Nineties," *The Advisor*, May 1959, 23, 25. Craig also commented on the many "fine outdoor amusements" of the young people in Ruffin and observed that even some of the girls there participated in fox chases.

paid the same, with the average monthly salary being $26.70 for whites and $25.24 for blacks. Black female teachers in Rockingham earned seven dollars more a month than the state average for women of color ($18.25). As a comparison, the highest salaries among all North Carolina public school teachers in 1898 were in New Hanover County, where Wilmington was its center of population. Here, white and black males received on average about the same monthly salary, at $35.00 and $34.75 respectively, while women teachers earned more, $35.70 for African Americans and $37.45 for white females.[36]

Still, with an increasingly trained teaching cohort, in 1898, only a little more than half of the 10,642 eligible students in Rockingham County were actually enrolled in school, with a racial makeup of 62 percent white and 38 percent black. As might be expected, the largest numbers enrolled were children of elementary age, but more than sixty twenty-year-old pupils also attended the public schools in 1898—forty whites and twenty-two African Americans. Both races studied a curriculum that emphasized arithmetic, geography, and English grammar. In apportionment of funds to pay teachers, monies were divided quite equitably according to enrollment in 1897, with about 61 percent going to white schools and 39 percent to blacks. No matter the district, public school buildings for both races remained small and scattered across the county, with a

36 "Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1898," 297, 293, 292, 296. New Hanover's higher salaries might be related to the thriving business sectors, both black and white, of the local economy in 1898 (described in various histories), as well as the fact that all but four of their system's 75 teachers had earned the highest level of certification. For an interesting example of the certification examination given to North Carolina teachers in 1899, see "Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of North Carolina, for the Scholastic Years 1898-'99 and 1899-1900," North Carolina. Department of Public Instruction, Electronic Edition, *Documenting the American South*, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 200-213, http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/ncinstruction1898/ncinstruction1898.html.

total of 118 schools operating in 1897. While the county reported more than 90 "school houses," 55 for whites and 35 for African Americans, more than two dozen schools continued to be taught in homes or other structures. Forty-one of these schools were housed in log structures, while the majority—49—were frame buildings. No brick public "school houses" existed in Rockingham County as the century ended, although these would become the standard of "modern" public schools in the next. Still, educational opportunities for both races advanced in the late nineteenth century. School houses, though sometimes crudely built, now existed all across the county, and, thanks in part to the persistence of Superintendent of Schools, N. S. Smith, scores of local teachers were trained. A town "charter" school system was in place in the rapidly growing town of Reidsville, and several academies offered white students more than a basic education. Twenty years earlier, as the county public schools emerged under the plan mandated by the new progressive state constitution written by Republicans during Reconstruction, the leadership of the county school board had insisted that all districts and their committees build and oversee both white and black schools. By the end of the century, however, several districts had split by race, a segregation that would become more pronounced in the new century.[37]

37 "Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1898," 289, 301, 305, 337, 293. In the 1897 academic term, there were 3,405 whites and 2,150 blacks enrolled in the county's public schools. Similar numbers of schools had been erected in many areas across the state with twenty-nine counties supporting a hundred or more schools in 1898. In Rockingham County, students of both races were still going to classes in log buildings—25 schools for whites and 16 for blacks of this type were still in operation.

CHAPTER III

RACIAL POLITICS AND SEGREGATED EDUCATION IN ROCKINGHAM COUNTY, 1900-1940

At the turn of the century, numerous small schools for both races operated across the countryside and in the towns of Rockingham County, all with limited facilities and offerings and overseen by the district committees as they had been since the 1870s. Impacted by the white supremacist campaigns in the early years of the century, African Americans in the county faced more restrictions and fewer resources. As a consequence, their rural schools fell behind during this period, despite efforts by many school patrons to maintain and bolster them. In comparison, local interests created several good private institutions for white students, while improvements were also made in white public school buildings in the towns and to a lesser extent in the rural communities. Not until the 1920s were educational opportunities for black students significantly strengthened by the development of a promising black high school in Reidsville and ten more facilities for African Americans partially financed by the Rosenwald Fund. White schools underwent broad consolidation efforts in the 1920s and 1930s that enabled more students to engage in a wider range of coursework with a larger faculty in more substantial and updated buildings. By the 1930s, three separate town districts plus the rural county system operated schools in Rockingham County, each segregated by race as well as marked by a divide between those schools in town and those scattered across the countryside. In this era, racial segregation in public schools took hold.

Aycock, White Supremacy, and the Increasing Inequities of a Segregated Education System

The events of 1900 marked a defining moment in the intertwined racial and educational history of North Carolina. Despite the fact that this period has had little examination in local histories, the citizens of Rockingham County were also caught up, just as the rest of the state, in the campaign to "redeem" the government from the biracial coalition and restore governance to white Democrats. Notably, just four years earlier, in the 1896 elections, votes in the county were divided among candidates of a variety of party affiliations. Voters chose a Republican sheriff, a Democratic register of deeds, and a Populist state senator. Ballots for North Carolina governor were about evenly split between the Democrat C. B. (Cy) Watson and the winner, Republican/Fusionist candidate Daniel L. Russell. Other county electoral results also were quite even, with the Democrat/Populist William Jennings Bryan receiving about three hundred more votes for United States President than the Republican William McKinley and in the Congressional race only two hundred votes separating the Democrat W. W. Kitchin from local son, Republican Thomas Settle III. In just a matter of months, however, the political winds were stirred by racial animus and then shifted toward the Democrats. County residents no doubt heard about the violent events in Wilmington in 1898. Instead of learning of the aggression of as many as four hundred whites in a planned attack on African Americans in that port city, as historians have recently corrected the record to reflect, citizens heard instead the narrative of white supremacists, such as the city's new mayor, A. M. Waddell, who claimed they had been forced to rescue

the city from the alleged misrule of white Republicans and blacks. The acknowledged "leader of the revolution in Wilmington," who had wrested management of city government from the lawfully elected biracial council, Waddell campaigned in subsequent months not only for disfranchisement of blacks in North Carolina but for the repeal of the Fifteenth Amendment altogether. Hearing repeatedly of this triumph in Wilmington, North Carolina, citizens could certainly have assumed that whites could expect little or no punishment for exerting the "rights" they would claim as the superior race, especially the right to govern.[1]

Stoking fears of "black rule" and endangered white women and children, Democrats, among them the future governor, Charles B. Aycock, would benefit politically from the intense racial climate gripping the state. He and others made false claims of widespread black crime, sexual assault against white women, and general disorder, all brought about by years of "ignorant negro rule" over the state's white population. The solution to calming the racial division, according to the Democrats, was to prevent

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1 "May Be M'Kinley," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, November 6, 1896, 1; "Official Vote," and "Settle Will Contest," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, November 13, 1896, 2; "Repeal the Fifteenth Amendment and Kill Vote of Colored Man," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, May 22, 1900, 1, reprinted from the *Atlanta Journal;* William A. Link, *North Carolina: Change and Tradition in a Southern State* (Wheeling, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 2009), 271, 274. The Rockingham County returns reported in the newspaper were Watson 2508, Russell 2423; Bryan 2882, McKinley 2569; Kitchin 2655, Settle 2420. Settle, who at age 31, was already serving as the youngest member of the U.S. Congress, claimed voting "irregularities" in the county had cost him the election. Historians have had much to correct in regard to the public's understanding of the events in Wilmington, North Carolina, in late 1898. Link explains the involvement of more than 400 whites in perpetrating violence on the blacks of the city, killing as many as sixty, and the overthrow of the duly installed city government, made up of five whites and five blacks. For other definitive histories of the Wilmington Massacre and the white supremacy campaign in North Carolina, see LeRae Sikes Umifleet, *A Day of Blood: The 1898 Wilmington Race Riot* (Raleigh: North Carolina Office of Archives and History, 2009); David S. Cecelski and Timothy B. Tyson, *Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and Its Legacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); and H. Leon Prather, *We Have Taken a City: Wilmington Racial Massacre and Coup of 1898* (Southport, NC: Dram Tree Books, 2006).

African Americans from participating in local, state, and national politics entirely—the complete disfranchisement of the black voter. This would be done by way of a state Constitutional amendment with literacy requirements and poll taxes, but with a clause that would "grandfather" in whites who would benefit from their racial status as descendants of those white men who could vote in 1860. Being illiterate would then not be a barrier to whites voting. Besides, as some argued, the amendment would spur white education. "Every white boy will be sure to learn how to read and write so that he may become a qualified voter," one proponent argued. In his inaugural address as governor, Aycock even spuriously claimed that, "realizing the importance of educating the white and black alike," the authors of the Amendment meant it as a step forward toward universal suffrage and education. The benefits to schooling were, of course, not the main purpose of the amendment, which was clearly understood by its supporters to be the total elimination of the African American vote, the removal of the "baneful and ruinous influence of irresponsible negro suffrage."[2]

This goal could not have been made clearer in the months leading up to the vote on disfranchisement. The intense rhetoric heard in Rockingham County in the campaign for the amendment came not only from local leaders and a number of articles in the local

2 "This Is the Way It Works," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, May 1, 1900, 1; Link, *North Carolina: Change and Tradition,* 268, 269, 271, 277; Charles B. Aycock, "Inaugural Address as Governor of North Carolina, January 15, 1901," in *The Life and Speeches of Charles Brantley Aycock*, eds. R. D. W. Connor and Clarence Poe, 232, HathiTrust Digital Library, https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001263799; "Fallacies of Negro Heelers," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, January 23, 1900, 1. In the "Fallacies" article, one supporter of the disfranchisement amendment wrote, "A large part of the negro population is, as everyone knows, utterly unfit for popular suffrage because of their dense ignorance and their want of natural capacity: and for these reasons their voting power is a menace to the best interest of the people of North Carolina."

newspapers, but from gubernatorial candidate Aycock himself. Apparently not fearful of a recent smallpox outbreak in Reidsville that had affected the Female Seminary and a postal employee a few weeks earlier, Aycock came to Rockingham County in May 1900. From local accounts, he stirred his audiences with fervor in support of the amendment, which would come before voters in August of that year, and no doubt in support of his campaign for governor as well. Met by a crowd and the Third Regiment Band at the depot in Reidsville, "the chivalrous Aycock" received a "royal welcome" and then made his way by carriage to Wentworth for his first speech of the day. A "mammoth band wagon" was put into service for the first time as the group traveled the few miles to the county seat, accompanied by "inspiring" music. Fifty men on horseback met Aycock and led him into Wentworth, where he was introduced by a local man "dressed in a red shirt and carrying the stars and stripes" and welcomed by "deafening applause." The throng, estimated to be between a thousand and twelve hundred, listened closely, enthralled by Aycock's oratory and his arguments about "the right of whites to reign supreme." He reminded them of the "lawlessness, thunder and arson" of Wilmington, affirming that he himself was one of the four hundred men who went to that city "in defense of the homes of Wilmington's white women and little children." Paying a "beautiful tribute to womanhood," and the need to protect them and their children with the proposed amendment, the future governor spoke for an hour and twenty-five minutes, urging his listeners to "disfranchise the ignorant negro from voting and holding office." "We are going to have a white government in North Carolina," he asserted. That evening, Aycock gave essentially the same speech, but "with added force," at the Leader Warehouse in

Reidsville. There he continued his appeal to the capacity crowd on the singular question of the campaign: "Shall the Anglo-Saxon race govern this State forever hereafter?" According to Aycock, with the disfranchisement amendment, assuredly so.[3]

Editorials in the local newspaper kept the issue of the voting amendment before the public during the summer, with one declaring, "We are not losing any great amount of sleep because the good old negro will be disfranchised. We wish we could stop them all." More directly in support of Aycock's campaign were the "white supremacy clubs" revived in the county in the week just after his speeches. The clubs, which had apparently also been put into service in earlier electoral seasons, were tasked with making sure all eligible white voters in each township were registered and ready on election day to challenge anyone "not entitled to vote." The "white people of the county" were urged by the newspaper editors to join the white supremacy club "in their neighborhood." Rumors of armed resistance to the amendment by white Republicans were repeated in the newspaper as well, with the editorial staff warning African Americans not to be involved. Local black citizens had "too much sense," the editorial stated, to take up arms. Besides,

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3 "All Over the State," *The Goldsboro* (NC) *Headlight*, February 22, 1900, North Carolina Newspapers, DigitalNC, http://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn91068337/1900-02-22/ed-1/seq-1/#index=3&rows=20&proxtext=%22Reidsville+Seminary%22&searchType=basic&sequence=0&words=Reidsville+Seminary&page=2. "Large Crowds Hear Aycock: Two Splendid Speeches in Support of the Constitutional Amendment," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, May 18, 1900, 2. The Goldsboro paper reported that the Reidsville Female Seminary had closed for a time because three students had been diagnosed with smallpox. The assistant postmaster in Reidsville had also come down with the illness and an order had gone out to "fumigate" the mail if thought necessary. Since the day of Aycock's speeches was full of symbolism and this clothing was given special mention in the local newspaper, the "red shirt" likely signified involvement in the Red Shirt movement of paramilitary supporters of white supremacy. Publicly acknowledging his own participation in Wilmington, Aycock told the crowd that, hearing of a "war on between the races," he had been one of the four hundred armed men who answered the call to defend the "white women and little children" of the city. "I am not ashamed to say," Aycock told the crowd in Wentworth, "that I was one of that number."

eventually they would see that their "white friends" were doing them a "good service in taking away from them the right to cast the ballot," which had caused so much "strife and turmoil."[4]

The amendment passed by more than fifty thousand votes statewide, with 59 percent voting for disfranchisement. In testament to the absolute triumph of the white supremacy campaign there, "only two negroes voted in the city of Wilmington." In Rockingham County, the vote supporting the amendment won by an even greater percentage—with 1,081 ballots or 82 percent in the affirmative. Only 242 voters were against the measure. Curiously, in each of the twenty precincts, the vote was unanimous either for or against. Six—Wentworth, Oregon (Hill), Stoneville, Bethlehem, Price, and Leaksville—voted unanimously against the proposal. On election day across the state, the local paper reported, women had played a key role in passing the amendment. Wearing "pure white" with "white silk banners" that read "White Supremacy Forever" and "The White Man Shall Rule," wives, mothers, and daughters had gathered at the polling places, singing and urging men to "redeem" the state from six years of "fusion" rule, "the darkest page in its history." Black citizens of Rockingham County must have received the messages of this campaign very clearly—not only was there was no place for them in state or local politics, but they had been deemed inferior by an official vote of their fellow citizens. The General Assembly, which had crafted the voting amendment in 1899, had also passed the state's first Jim Crow law, segregating railroad cars and

4 "Editorial Column," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, June 29, 1900, 2; "Join the Club," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, May 25, 1900, 2; "Bad Talk to Negroes," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, July 24, 1900, 2.

steamboats. It looked as if, as the local headline read: "Everybody Satisfied With the Outcome . . . The Negro Goes Out of Politics Forever." Instead of hopeful opening decades of a new century, African Americans would now face increasing discrimination, segregation, and restricted access to resources and opportunities.[5]

White Education 1900-1920

For white citizens, on the other hand, the new state administration offered new possibilities, especially regarding their schools. Aycock did, indeed, promote the spread of public education in his one term as North Carolina Governor (1900-1904), and in his speeches, he ostensibly called for advancements for both races. However, these calls were understood more broadly in terms of a white supremacist agenda, which strengthened its hold on state politics. The effects could readily be seen in the public schools. The number of buildings for whites grew from 4,898 in 1900 to 5,053 in 1906, but school houses for black children during this time increased by only one, and not because of progressive consolidation—from 2,200 in 1900 to 2,201 six years later. Enrollment of both whites and blacks continued to increase in the new century, from about 278,000 whites in 1900 to nearly 331,000 in 1906 and from around 131,000 black pupils in 1900 to 152,000 in 1906, but the percentage of state funds spent on African American teachers to instruct these mostly rural black students declined. About 30 percent of the budget for hiring rural teachers had been spent on black instructors in 1870 and had risen to a peak of 45 percent in 1883, as emphasis was placed on providing at

5 Link, *North Carolina: Change and Tradition*, 278; "Big Democratic Majority," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, August 3, 1900, 1; "The Vote of Rockingham," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, August 3, 1900, 2; "The Good Women's Interests," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, August 3, 1900, 2. The unanimous votes in all twenty precincts are difficult to interpret. It is also unclear how many African Americans voted.

least some instruction for African Americans who had previously had little to none. While the racial makeup of the state's population had changed from 38 percent black in 1880 to 32 percent African American by 1910, the proportion spent on black schools had fallen far below that, to only 21 percent in 1906. Addressing the state Democratic Convention in Greensboro near the end of his term, Governor Aycock sought to refute claims that his administration had done "too much for the negro" and explained how he had approached school funding. He reminded his party of the successful disfranchisement of blacks and gave evidence of the intentional pullback on funding African American schools. Whereas in 1883 the state had spent "$1.04 per capita for white children and $1.50 per capita for colored children—a difference of 48 cents in favor of the negro," twenty years later his leadership had reversed these expenditures, with "a difference in favor of whites of 75 cents per capita." Still in terms of education spending by race in the early twentieth century, North Carolina had a much narrower gap than did other southern states.[6]

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6 Charles L. Coon, *A Statistical Record of the Progress of Public Education in North Carolina, 1870-1906* (Raleigh: Office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1907), 15, 7, 13; Population figures are from "North Carolina Population by Race," *Social Explorer*, https://www.socialexplorer.com/a9676d974c/explore; Charles B. Aycock, "Address Before the Democratic State Convention at Greensboro, June 23, 1904," in *The Life and Speeches of Charles Brantley Aycock*, eds. R. D. W. Connor and Clarence Poe, 259; Michael J. Klarman, Brown v. Board of Education *and the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 17. Aycock told his audience that in 1903, per capita expenditure in North Carolina was $1.89 for whites and $1.14 for blacks. Coon records that the amount spent on paying teachers in the state's rural schools in 1883 was $303,726.24 for whites and $249,047.29 for blacks. In 1900 the gap in funding was beginning to show a decided difference in race: Whites $547,192.39 and "Colored" $219,001.56. By 1906, pay for teachers at white schools in the state was $821,552.69 and $212, 293.85 for those in black schools. Klarman supports the claim that the racial spending gap was narrower in North Carolina. In 1915, the state spent three times as much on a white pupil as a black student, while the figure was six times as much in Alabama and twelve times more in South Carolina.

In Rockingham County education funding was also a primary focus of school leadership in the early decades of the century. In fact, in 1909, the county superintendent, L. N. Hickerson, was praised in a statewide education publication for his pledge to carry on a "strenuous campaign for local taxation" to fund schools. "With a purpose like this in view" wrote the editor, "Rockingham County will continue in the list of progressive counties." Critics of the public school system, however, often lamented that whites bore the bulk of taxes and therefore were paying nearly all the costs for the African American schools. In refutation of this belief, Charles L. Coon, the white superintendent of the Wilson, North Carolina, schools made a detailed study of the sources of public school funds and their subsequent division to white and black schools. In 1909, at a conference in Atlanta, Georgia, Coon argued that "the Negro school of the South is no serious burden on the white taxpayer." In fact, he suggested, "Suppose the Negro children of these States were all white. Then it will be found that it would cost to educate the present Negro school population, on the basis they were all white, just about five times as much as it does now." Giving evidence of the "economic importance of the Negro" in North Carolina and other southern states, Coon concluded with his hope "that the senseless race prejudice which has for its object the intellectual enslavement of Negro children will soon pass away."[7]

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7 *North Carolina Education: A Journal of Education, Rural Progress, and Civil Betterment,* September 1909, 16, North Carolina Digital Collections, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, http://digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm/ref/collection/p249901coll37/id/14061 (hereafter cited as *North Carolina Education*); Charles L. Coon, "Public Taxation and Negro Schools," Twelfth Annual Conference for Education in the South, Atlanta Georgia (April 14-16, 1909), 7, 9, 10, 11, *Textiles, Teachers, and Troops—Greensboro 1880-1945*, Digital Collections, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, http://libcdm1.uncg.edu/cdm/ref/collection/ttt/id/26043. Coon's analysis showed that North Carolina spent only $402,658 on black schools in 1908, while a fair division of funds by race would have

Despite Aycock's reputation as the "education governor," state governance of schools from the turn of the century into the 1920s was quite limited and the very existence of schools often depended on the efforts of local citizens. In Rockingham County this dynamic was particularly true. The tasks of building new schoolhouses and supplying these facilities were still left largely to local committees and concerned school patrons in each community during Aycock's term and after. Advancements at the state level did include for the first time an allocation of $100,000 for the state's public schools, new mandates for longer school terms, and mandatory attendance for students ages eight to twelve. Also, a new Child Labor Law meant that more young children would find their way out of the factories and into classrooms. Still education at this time was very "local" in nature, with about seventy-five basic one and two-teacher schools for whites scattered over the county. In the public schools of Rockingham County, enormous emphasis was placed on the role of school committees and other local leaders in establishing and improving each neighborhood's small school. In addition, the early years of the new century were also marked by growth in private white education, with several high-quality local institutions for white students operating in the county.[8]

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allotted $429,197 to African American education. In the 1880s, African Americans in North Carolina had successfully defeated efforts to base apportionment of school funds on the amount of taxes paid by each race when the Dortch Act was declared unconstitutional by the state Supreme Court. See Jeffrey J. Crow, Paul D. Escott, and Flora J. Hatley, *A History of African Americans in North Carolina* (Raleigh: Office of Archives and History, 1992, 2002),111-12.

8 *History of Education in North Carolina*, State Department of Public Instruction (Raleigh: 1993), 12-13, https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED369713.pdf; Link, *North Carolina: Change and Tradition,* 304. The first appropriation of tax dollars to public schools was made in 1901, Compulsory Attendance was required in 1913, and the mandated school term was extended from four months to six in 1919. Link explains that the state legislature put some restrictions on child labor in place in 1907.

Private White Education in Rockingham County, 1900-1920

A high point for white schools in the county was the Sharp Institute, a "nonsectarian and co-educational" day and boarding school in the Intelligence community. The academy was founded in 1900 by "President and Proprietor" James Merritt Sharp, the father of future North Carolina Supreme Court Chief Justice, Susie Sharp. In October of that year the school opened with fifty students, by the spring of 1902 had tripled enrollment to 166, and in subsequent terms instructed more than two hundred, about the same number of girls as boys. In setting up his school and obtaining a mailing address for the site outside of the town of Madison, Sharp was directed by the Post Office to choose a name for the area that was not duplicated anywhere else in the state. Sharp chose "Intelligence" for the community surrounding the Institute. The school was advertised as being located in "a section of the Piedmont region unequaled for health and beauty" with some revered history, along one of the roads traveled by General Nathaniel Greene and his troops during the Revolution. Parents were promised close supervision of their children if they enrolled at Sharp Institute and that "no seductive influences" would be "thrown around the students to divert their attention." Sharp also assured families that he would meet their children in Madison at the nearest railway stop and that they could reach him to notify him of their arrival because "the school is connected with Madison by phone." The trip by wagon to the school, however, though only a matter of four and a half miles, would take forty minutes.[9]

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9 "Sharp Institute," Brochure for 1906-1907 Term, Intelligence, North Carolina, 11, 3, 5, 7, 25-30, 4, 12, 17, 21; Anna R. Hayes, *Without Precedent: The Life of Susie Marshall Sharp* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 7-8. Of the 189 students enrolled in 1905-1906, the numbers skewed

One of the areas of instruction at the Sharp Institute was the "Normal Department." Suggesting the widespread need for teachers in North Carolina at this time, these teachers in training were "often called on to take charge of schools before completing [the] . . . entire course." Students could also receive instruction in business and music, as well as prepare for the university; tuition varied by course from $1.50 to $4.00 a month. Sharp promoted the Institute in its literature with a bold claim: "To say you have completed the courses prescribed by this institution means a recommendation that the world will recognize." The school did, indeed, receive public attention and acclaim. Its baseball team played and won games against other "colleges and high-schools" in the state and was often written about in local newspapers. In 1903, a crowd of about two thousand attended the Sharp Institute end-of-the-year ceremonies, hearing a speech from Governor Charles Aycock at the closing exercises. In the Institute's 1906 brochure, Congressman W. W. Kitchin praised Sharp as an "earnest, industrious, energetic, and progressive educator." And, in testimony to the "excellent school" that Sharp had established, Aycock, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction J. Y. Joyner, and several local officials recommended that North Carolina citizens contribute financially to the educational endeavors in Intelligence. Despite thriving and growing in numbers and academic reputation, however, the Institute lasted only for seven years, its tenure marred by two devastating fires—in 1904 and 1907. After the second fire, Sharp did not rebuild. He later moved to Reidsville where he established a law practice.[10]

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toward males with 110 boys listed in the 1906-1907 brochure. Most were from Rockingham County, but students also hailed from nine other North Carolina counties and Virginia.

10 "Sharp Institute," Brochure for 1906-1907, 9, 13, 17, 9-10, 14, 5, 6, 22-23; "Localettes," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, May 6, 1904, 3; "Madison vs. Sharp," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, April 1, 1904, 2;

Known for its cultural life and musical program, the Reidsville Seminary was the most noted institution of private education for whites in that community in the early twentieth century. Opened as an academy for girls in the 1870s, the school was operated by Miss Emma Scales, sister of North Carolina Governor Alfred Moore Scales, until her death in 1904. By the 1910s, the Seminary was coeducational and advertised as a preparatory school for college or business. In these years, with Frank H. Curtiss as principal, the school promoted its modern lighting, water, and sewer, as well as its "excellent faculty" and broad curriculum that encompassed academics, arts, and commercial studies. Although the Seminary was relatively small, as a graduating class of eleven in 1914 suggests, activities for students included a sports program with scheduled football games against nearby schools, including numerous contests against Greensboro High School. The Reidsville Seminary, however, was best known for its concerts and artistic presentations, which were often noted in the Greensboro paper and offered to the wider area as a place to come for cultural refinement. Commencement programs at the school, located on the south side of Lawsonville Avenue, were well attended and typically included music, recitations, and a play. A piano seller touted Reidsville Seminary among the purchasers of a "celebrated STIEFF Piano," and the school employed several talented instructors. The singing duo of A. Walter Smith, bass-cantante, and F. Karl von Wiegand performed a recital at the school as they were beginning their tenures there in 1914. One

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"Localettes," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, April 12, 1904 and April 19, 1904, 3; "Sharp Institute, 8; Catawba College, 4," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, April 27, 1906, 6; Hayes, *Without Precedent*, 8, 11, 12-14. The promotional brochure for the Institute boasted, "Probably no school in the State gives better facilities for musical training at so reasonable cost." Students could study vocal music, plus piano, violin, mandolin, and guitar.

English instructor from the Seminary, Professor C. P. Weaver, went on from Reidsville to a position at the University of Maine.[11]

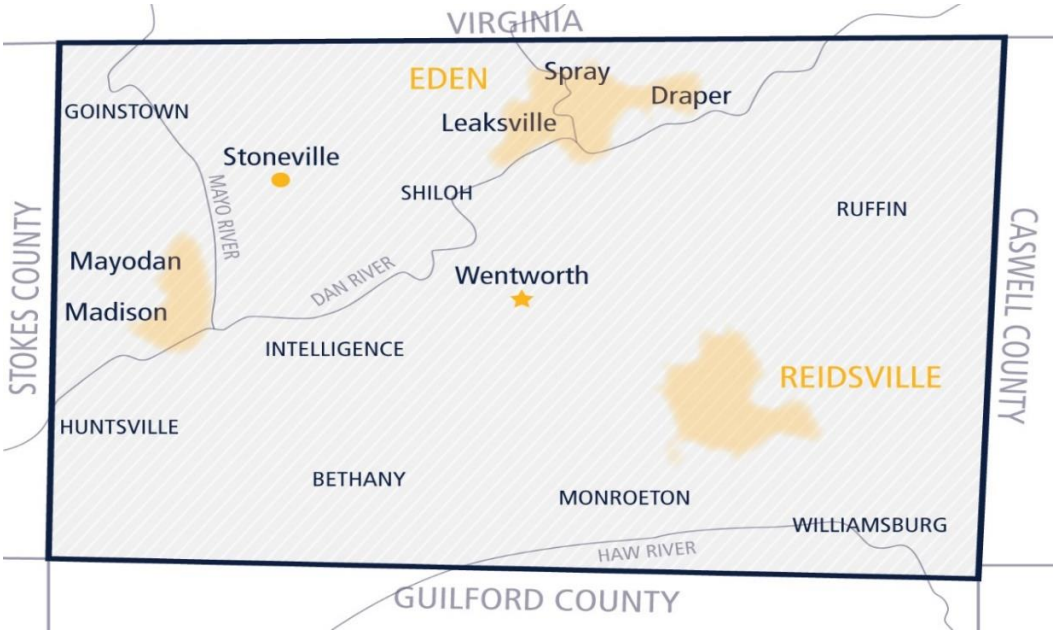

Figure 2. Towns and Communities of Rockingham County. Source: Map by Graham Russell. Indicated by the Pink Shading are the Municipalities of Rockingham County—Reidsville, Madison, Mayodan, and the Tri-Cities (Leaksville, Spray and Draper, Which Merged in 1967 to Become Present-day Eden). The Small Town of Stoneville and the County Seat of Wentworth are Also Shown. Located on the Map are Some of the Other Rural Communities Addressed in this Dissertation—Huntsville, Intelligence, Bethany, Monroeton, Williamsburg, Ruffin, Shiloh, and Goinstown.

11 "Emma Jane Scales," Burwell School Historic Site, https://www.burwellschool.org/research/pPerson.php?id=481; "Ad for Reidsville Seminary," *Danbury* (NC) *Reporter*, June 29, 1910, 4, North Carolina Newspapers, DigitalNC, http://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn91068291/1910-06-29/ed-1/seq-4/print/image_563x817_from_2473%2C1807_to_5452%2C6123/; "Ad for Reidsville Seminary," *The* (Burlington, NC) *State Dispatch*, July 5, 1911, 8, North Carolina Newspapers, DigitalNC, http://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn91068218/1911-07-05/ed-1/seq-3/print/image_624x817_from_3383%2C2647_to_6001%2C6072/; "Reidsville Seminary Had Fine Exercises," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, May 26, 1914, 1; "Football Tomorrow," *Greensboro* (NC) *Record*, October 30, 1908, 6; "Football Game Today," *Greensboro* (NC) *Record*, September 27, 1913, 5; "Reidsville Defeats Greensboro," *Greensboro* (NC) *Record*, October 13, 1913, 1; "Commencement at Reidsville Seminary," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, May 27, 1906, 9; *Reidsville Revisited: A Pictorial History, 1993*, 5, https://archive.org/stream/reidsvillerevisi1993dela#page/4/mode/2up/search/%22Seminary%22; "Stop, Look and Listen," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, October 24, 1909, 3; "Gave Recital at Reidsville," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, February 1, 1914, 5; "Prof. C. P. Weaver," *Greensboro* (NC) *Record*, November 21, 1908, 8. Scales was one of the noted graduates of the Burwell School. She was assisted in operating the school by Annie Savalette Hughes.

The Seminary fit quite well into a community seeking to provide cultural experiences to its citizens. Besides offering concerts and plays at the Seminary, Reidsville hosted a number of other notable entertainment and learning events during the first two decades of the new century. A Chautauqua series typically came to the town yearly. In 1914, for a $2.00 ticket, one could attend thirty-one events over seven days. Performers included a Russian quartet, opera vocalists with costumes, Alpine yodelers, and the Tuskegee Institute Singers, "Eight of the Best Singers From Booker T. Washington's Famous school." During the week, local folks could also take in a production of Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night," two reels of motion pictures each evening, or a number of lectures, one by Frank Dixon, brother of the author Thomas Dixon of *The Klansman* fame. At other times of the year, entertainment was available at the Grotto Theatre in Reidsville, which offered plays from New York and touring comedy shows, as well as new miraculous motion pictures, "making living pictures on the screen." In addition, well-known speakers stopped in Reidsville on visits to the state, including former presidential candidate and member of President Woodrow Wilson's cabinet, William Jennings Bryan, who was on hand for the 1914 July Fourth celebration. Events at the private school and at other venues meant that Reidsville's white citizens had an array of cultural experiences available to them.[12]

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12 "Chautauqua Week," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, June 2, 1914, 4; "Chautauqua Schedule," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, March 24, 1914, 1; "What Those Who Attend the Chautauqua Will Hear," *The* (Asheboro, NC) *Courier*, June 11, 1914, 7, North Carolina Newspapers, DigitalNC, http://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn91068009/1914-06-11/ed-1/seq-7#sort=relevance&index=3&rows=20&words=Dixon+DIXON+FRANK+Frank&searchType=basic&sequence=0&proxtext=%22Frank+Dixon%22&page=2; "Chautauqua Opens Here Friday with a Mammoth Parade," *Hertford County* (NC) *Herald*, May 25, 1923, 1, North Carolina Newspapers, DigitalNC, http://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn/sn84020677/1923-05-25/ed-1/seq-1/#index=10&rows=20&proxtext=%22Frank+Dixon%22&searchType=

A third notable local private institution was the Leaksville-Spray Institute. A boarding and day school for whites, which opened in 1905, the Institute was an outgrowth of the congregation of the Leaksville First Baptist Church, whose members thought that "there ought to be a Baptist secondary school in this part of the state." On land partially donated by Lily Morehead Mebane and her husband Frank, members of the prominent Morehead family, founders constructed two classroom buildings on the campus in "The Highlands, a fashionable residential neighborhood." They obtained the services of an experienced principal and taught a first-year class of about one hundred. A variety of courses, including commercial, mathematics, and humanities were available, as well as vocal and instrumental music. A boys' dormitory was added the second year. Open to both sexes, the founders expressed their belief that coeducational opportunities were best "because God in his wisdom created brother and sister in the same family" and their school was "but a large family receiving instruction at a common source." Advertising the school, the organizers boasted of its location "about four miles from the Virginia line" and accessible with "three daily trains" through the towns of Leaksville and Spray, a "manufacturing center with 6,000 inhabitants." Most of all, however, the promoters framed the towns and the Institute as places of "high character." "Cultured and refined, kind and hospitable, its people compose a model community," one description read. The place was a "prohibition" town where students would be

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basic&sequence=0&words=Dixon+Frank&page=1; "Grotto Theatre Ads," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, April 14, 1914, 4, 5 and *Reidsville Weekly*, December 28, 1914; "Reidsville Will Give Bryan Big Welcome," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, June 30, 1914, 3. The Asheboro paper noted that the "Spring Circuit" came to thirty-three towns, Reidsville among them. Frank Dixon's lecture was called "the most talked-of on the Chautauqua program."

"safeguarded from every vicious influence." The Institute operated under the auspices of the Baptists until 1917, with a one-year break in 1913, but closed because of debt.[13]

White Public Town Schools in Rockingham County, 1900-1930s

Distinctive public educational institutions for white students were also emerging in each of three "city" areas of the county, as the divide between town and country widened in the early years of the twentieth century. Towns where school-aged populations were concentrated began to provide students measurably better facilities in which to attend school than those available in the more rural communities. Several white school districts were consolidated during the decade of the 1920s and larger brick schools that could house several grades and more teachers were built in three areas—Leaksville Township, Madison, and Reidsville. The rural communities gradually improved their schools as funds were raised through special taxes, allowing significant improvements to be made to white facilities. In the 1920s and 1930s, rural residents largely caught up with their town neighbors. By the end of the 1930s, the dozens of small schools for white students were consolidated into ten more modern and well-equipped facilities, providing educational opportunities that were similar to those in the towns.

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13 "Leaksville-Spray Institute," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, January 30, 1989, 4, 5; *Catalogue of Leaksville-Spray Institute,* Leaksville, NC, 1905-1906, 5, 6, 7. Internet Archive, North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, https://ia801708.us.archive.org/23/items/catalogueofleaks19051906leak/catalogueofleaks19051906leak.pdf; *The Pilot*, yearbook, Leaksville High School, 1937, 5, DigitalNC, North Carolina Digital Heritage Center, https://library.digitalnc.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/yearbooks/id/12061/rec/3; "C. M. Beach, Leaksville, Succumbs," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, August 19, 1959, 18. The experienced principal was the Rev. J. A. Beam, who had led a school at Bethel Hill, North Carolina for seventeen years. One of the principals at Leaksville-Spray Institute, C. M. Beach, went on to become president of Wingate College.

By the 1910s, in the northern end of the county, "one of the most thickly populated sections," the Leaksville Graded School, a tall, brick two-story facility, had over four hundred students enrolled and employed nine teachers. In this area, where lived, as the local newspaper described them, "great hordes of children whose parents toil in the textile enterprises," the 1914 census of school-age youth identified 1,053 white children in the mill town of Spray alone. These numbers likely increased in subsequent years as the recently passed Child Labor Law, prohibiting manufacturing work by children twelve and younger, was implemented. Business interests in this community were instrumental in improving schools. The Spray Graded School design of 1914 boasted twelve recitation rooms, an auditorium, and a very desirable location on land that had been obtained from the Spray Water Power and Land Company for a "greatly reduced price." In buildings rented from the then-defunct Leaksville-Spray Institute, the first public high school in Leaksville opened in 1917. Mr. P. H. Gwynn served as its superintendent from 1917-1920 and his son, J. Minor Gwynn, acted as principal in 1919-20, when the first Leaksville High School graduating class numbered only four. Still the high school was among those for white students in the state achieving accreditation that year, along with the Reidsville High School.[14]

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14 "School Faculty of Rockingham County," 2-7; "Leaksville Graded School," 1-5; "Hon. J. H. Lane Is a Member of the Board," 1-2; "Child Labor Law," 2-2, "Spray Graded School," 1-3, all in Educational Edition, *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, October 16, 1914; Link, *North Carolina: Change and Tradition,* 304; *North Carolina Educational Directory, 1949-1950*, 91, 92. The October 1914 special issue in three sections contained numerous photos of school buildings and captions as well as dozens of articles about education in Rockingham County. Sections and pages are indicated in these citations as shown above: Section-Page (2-7, for instance). The school superintendent of each county was tasked with identifying and reporting violations of the Child Labor law. The *Educational Directory* shows that the first year the standards for accreditation were officially applied seems to have been 1920, as dozens of North Carolina schools are designated as achieving the distinction that year.

In the Tri-Cities area, twelve different school districts—seven for whites and five for African Americans—existed until 1921, when the citizens of Leaksville Township undertook what they saw as "the largest consolidation project of any township in the state." The vote for consolidation of the district was overwhelming with 595 for and only 14 against. Bringing together the schools for Leaksville and Spray, two towns whose boundaries virtually joined with Draper, another mill town "of four thousand people about three miles distant," the new district served a total of about fourteen thousand citizens and a school population of over three thousand pupils, both black and white. The previous year, the various schools of this newly consolidated district had employed fifty-nine white and twelve "colored" teachers. Nearly all of the district's buildings were in the three towns and the graded white schools in Leaksville and Spray were housed in "modern, up-to-date brick buildings." The white Leaksville High School offered, among other academic advantages, "first class laboratories for both physics and chemistry."[15]

The newly appointed Superintendent of the Leaksville Township Schools had set out in 1921 to make sure local schools were updated, but within a decade of consolidation, the white schools in the Leaksville Township seemed old and too small, especially for a community that was "experiencing a rapid growth." The only high school for whites was still being held in the rented facilities of the former Leaksville-Spray Institute, and though a decade earlier it had seemed quite adequate, now operated "without much equipment." In 1930, the board purchased for $20,000 the property they

15 *The Pilot*, yearbook, Leaksville High School, 1937, 5; Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, May 10, 1921; James E. Holmes, "A Unique Consolidation," *North Carolina Education*, December 1921, 23.

had been renting and set about planning for reconditioning the building and adding wings. A "massive structure" was eventually built on the site, adding classrooms and an auditorium to the original administration building and Girls Home. Even in the midst of an economic depression, the community organized, "helpers" went to the mills to get workers to participate, and voters cast ballots overwhelmingly to issue school bonds to finance new buildings. The citizens of one of these mill neighborhoods, North Spray, took on a very active role in the selection of the site for a new elementary school in their community. Over six months, competing groups pressured the board with petitions signed by scores of school patrons who desired one of four proposed sites. In the end, the board went with the three-acre location it had originally identified before the petitions, but it entertained the input of several hundred area white residents in their decision.[16]

During the Depression, the Leaksville Board of Trustees declared that it was "very anxious to do all that it [could] to satisfy each section" of that community and continually sought connections to local businesses and civic groups as they attempted to build additions, plan improvements, and make repairs. In 1930, the Leaksville board attempted to bolster the local economy by stating their expectation that building contractors should use local labor and materials for their projects whenever available. During these years when some federal assistance for building was available, classroom additions were made at Leaksville Graded, Burton Grove, Draper, and North Spray, all schools for white pupils. Money for supplies and paying teachers, however, was harder to come by. In

16 "Leaksville-Spray Institute," National Register of Historic Places, 6; Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, May 13, 1930; May 26, 1930; July 8, 1930; August 28, 1930, August 14, 1930; August 28, 1930; September 2, 1930; and January 9, 1931. The vote was 1783 For and 180 Against. One of the "helpers" was future North Carolina Governor Luther H. Hodges.

these difficult economic times, Superintendent James E. Holmes sought frugality and recommended buying 585 desks he had found on a trip to Richmond. The lot had been salvaged from a fire but were "practically as good as new," he reported. As economic woes deepened, more than four hundred pupils in the Leaksville schools lacked sufficient books. As a remedy, the school board asked clubs and churches to give to a book rental fund. To raise needed monies during the Depression, the old white Fitzgerald school building was sold, but the Leaksville system held on to the land. They even sold the school bell located at Draper Graded. Still, the Leaksville system did not have the money available in April 1933 to pay teachers for the last three weeks of school. They convened a meeting with all the white teachers in the district and explained to them that they could "make no definite promise of Salary for the remainder of the school term" but would pay them if possible in the next twelve months from taxes that had been assessed but had not yet come in. All eighty-five of the teachers present signed an agreement to finish the school year under these terms. Superintendent Holmes was instructed to make the same presentation to the "colored teachers," and they also signed the ballots agreeing to teach for the rest of the school term.[17]

17 Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, November 10, 1930; February 11, 1931; February 25, 1931; March 16, 1931; August 4, 1931; September 19, 1932; January 17, 1933; April 21, 1933; and April 22, 1933. For accounts of improvements and repairs, see also minutes dated July 14, 1931; February 9, 1932; and May 25, 1932; J. E. McLean, "County Has an Enrollment of 15,700 Students," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, Fiftieth Anniversary Edition, 1938, E4. At this time, according to board records, a total of twenty-six classrooms were added in the white schools: ten at Leaksville Graded, eight at Draper, and four each at Burton Grove and North Spray. McLean explained that the mid-1930s were favorable for building schools and additions because the federal government offered loans at 4 percent interest and often supplied 30 percent of construction costs.

To persevere through the Depression, local school officials also sought direct assistance from the federal government. They applied to the Reconstruction Finance Corp (RFC) for help with needed equipment, seating, repairs, grading, sidewalks, and painting, with the hope that the agency would furnish labor costs "under the plan of relief to the poor." Despite economic challenges, school system enrollment had grown in the Leaksville Township from about thirty-five hundred in 1921 to nearly forty-seven hundred by 1934. To accommodate this increase, school officials had been able over several years and with a variety of funding resources to build and supply "six large modern" white elementary schools and a "large well-equipped high school for white pupils" by the mid-1930s. Having been built for a student body of six hundred, the high school, though large and featuring tennis courts and a "splendid track," faced serious overcrowding. Superintendent Holmes projected an enrollment at the Leaksville High School of more than a thousand in the fall of 1938, "making it one of the largest in the state." Near the end of the decade, the most substantial federal Leaksville school construction was completed. As a project of the Public Works Administration (PWA), a new white high school for the Draper area was built in 1938-1939. The school was a one-story structure with wings housing eight classrooms, a science laboratory, and a home economics room. Located "east of the Draper mills," the property for the school was bought from the Marshall Field Company, prominent in the economic life of the Tri-Cities.[18]

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18 Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, September 19, 1932; October 26, 1932, July 18, 1933; August 1, 1933; and February 25, 1939; "Leaksville Township Schools Great Asset to Community," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, August 30, 1934, A6; "Township Schools To Open Sept. 12," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, August 11, 1938, 1; J. E. McLean, "County Has an Enrollment of 15,700 Students," *Reidsville*

One local educator, in fact, defined area politics as centering on the economic life of the textile communities. Both black and white citizens, he said, "acted and reacted to the thesis of what was good for the mills." School officials across the county in Reidsville noted this involvement in the early 1920s, observing that the Marshall Field Company, which paid the largest share of local taxes supporting schools, was "advocating the expenditure of hundreds of thousands of dollars" for improvements in the school system. In the 1920s and 1930s, school officials certainly looked to the managers and workers at the numerous local textile mills for their assistance in operating their schools. Wondering how they might finance their rental and repairs of the Leaksville Institute property as well as other ongoing needs of the schools, the board asked some local mills to pay their taxes early. Within days, they received $21,000 in early taxes from Carolina Cotton and Woolen Mills and Spray Cotton Mills. Mill workers also provided the labor for new sidewalks at Burton Grove Elementary School. The schools sought to establish and maintain valuable partnerships with local businesses and other community entities. In one instance, the Leaksville High School Domestic Science class served supper to the school board and their guest, Luther H. Hodges, one of the top managers at the Marshall Field textile mills. In the midst of the Depression, the school system worked out a joint venture to provide chemistry classes, with federal funds paying one half of the cost, the state providing one-fourth, and the rest of the position being paid for by the Leaksville

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(NC) *Review*, Fiftieth Anniversary Edition, 1938, E4. "Contracts Awarded for High School at Draper-Many Bidders on Project," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, September 1, 1938, 1. Some of the growth in the Leaksville District came from expanding boundaries to the west and south in 1933. The enrollment at the Leaksville High School was, in fact, more than one thousand (1014) in February of 1939 and the school board began to plan to alleviate the overcrowding.

Hospital. The women of the Leaksville Graded PTA organization also came to the aid of Depression-era students with an innovative plan to provide music classes for all the school's pupils, assuring that those who could not afford the fifty-cent yearly fee for seventy-five minutes of instruction each week would be included.[19]

In addition to modern elementary and high school facilities, in the years leading up to World War II, whites in the Tri-Cities of Leaksville, Spray, and Draper also had access to a comprehensive Vocational School operated by the local public school system with the assistance of the numerous industrial interests in the area. Prior to opening this school, there had long been a strong interest in the Leaksville district in promoting literacy among adult workers. In the early 1920s, a large number of night classes were set up in the Tri-Cities area for men and boys who worked in the area's textile plants and wanted to "get a better education and to make themselves ready for better jobs." Eighteen different night classes, each meeting twice a week, were organized by the mills' educational director and future North Carolina governor, Luther H. Hodges. One class in elementary electricity met on Tuesday and Saturday nights. "You can be sure that a class of boys that will meet on Saturday nights is serious in its work," one observer noted. In 1931, a delegation representing the Committee on Adult Illiteracy asked the local school board for and received one thousand dollars to hold classes in basic education for three months. One member of this committee was again Hodges, who took on a role teaching adults throughout this period. Finances thinned as the Depression continued. Hodges

19 Lawrence E. Boyd, "Reminiscences," Butler Collection, Rockingham Community College Historical Collections, Gerald B. James Library, Wentworth, North Carolina; "Reidsville Will Vote on $300,000 School Bonds," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, April 5, 1921, 1; Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, August 26, 1929; September 5, 1929; May 25, 1932; January 17, 1933; and July 5, 1937.

returned to the Leaksville school board, seeking funds from the school system to carry on this vocational and literacy work in night classes. They were able to give only half of what was requested, as they were cutting expenses in several areas, including reducing pay for the superintendent and principals by 10 percent. The school system did, however, take on this project in just a few months and were able to fund eleven night classes, including one for black citizens in the Draper section. Superintendent Holmes and board member Karl Bishopric had requested that this class for African Americans be included, even if auto mechanics had to be dropped to meet the limited budget. In 1934, night classes in the Tri-Cities area were expanded, with the state and the Leaksville Hospital sharing expenses for a course in Dietetics. While monies were limited, the Leaksville school system was able to commit an additional $450 from local funds for the "promotion of evening schools in Trades and Industries" in late 1936. In 1939, Hodges was still involved in keeping these classes going, obtaining $250 from the local schools and matching that amount from his own funds. Clearly, these vocational and literacy courses were of great importance to the citizens of the Tri-Cities area.[20]

With a focus on textiles and featuring Jaquard looms, the Leaksville Vocational School officially opened in 1937, as a division of the Leaksville High School. Those eligible to attend the school as it was initiated were junior and senior-level high school boys or "employees from local and industrial and business enterprises." In its first year, seventy-five students earned "diplomas, certificates, or unit cards . . . in yarn

20 "Notable Success in Night Class Work," *North Carolina Education*, December 1921, 27; Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, January 9, 1931; July 29, 1932; September 19, 1932; October 5, 1934; November 16, 1934; and May 25, 1939.

manufacturing or weaving and designing." Teacher training courses framed to focus on the skills to be taught at this special school were conducted by industrial education experts, including a professor from North Carolina State College. Skilled instructors were hired and equipment was purchased by the local school board as courses were gradually expanded to include "practical English" as well as metal and woodworking. At mid-century, the citizens of the Tri-Cities area clearly had great advantages over residents of other parts of the county in workplace education and vocational training.[21]

Having already established their town schools as a separate system from that of the county in the 1880s, Reidsville residents continued to build and improve their educational facilities for whites in the new century. One of the school highlights for locals came in 1901 when Governor Aycock returned to Reidsville about a year after his participation in the disfranchisement campaign and gave "his famous and well remembered speech on education." Since there was no building in Reidsville large enough to hold the crowd, the speech was held outside, but under a special arbor built for the occasion. A barbecue was served afterward to all those present, and the listeners were so inspired by Aycock's words that they soon after voted for school bonds to build a "new and adequate school plant for the Reidsville children." Franklin Street School, which opened in early 1902 and had five graduates in May of that year, was the result. At the time, the facility was so large that many in the community felt that Reidsville, which had already operated its own schools for about twenty years, would never need so many

21 Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, July 19, 1937; "Expanding Facilities of Vocational Textile School for Opening of Fall Term," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, August 11, 1938, 1; "Training Course for Local Textile School Instructors Being Held This Week," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, August 25, 1938, 1.

classrooms. By 1910, however, two additional classrooms and a laboratory had to be adapted for use in the space above the auditorium. For whites, their graded school, a large three-story brick structure with at least eighteen rounded windows across its front, was certainly a massive structure in comparison to the facilities available in the surrounding countryside. Continuing to grow, the Reidsville district, which was 57 percent white and 43 percent African American at this time, had more than eighteen hundred total students enrolled in their town schools by 1914. This growth in the Reidsville white school population necessitated that in 1914 a small building near the Edna Cotton Mill and two additional teachers had to be secured for the instruction of some smaller children. Only two years later, white student enrollment in Reidsville was so large that a new elementary school was "imperative." The new Lawsonville Avenue School, which opened in fall 1917, "housed all of the elementary children on the east side of the railroad," while all Reidsville white high school students and younger pupils west of the railway remained at the Franklin Street building. At this point, J. H. Allen became principal of Reidsville High School, succeeding T. Wingate Andrews.[22]

Further growth in white school attendance occurred and Reidsville citizens organized to pass a bond referendum to support the schools in 1921. Such a bond campaign took extra effort because citizens typically had to register for these special elections and then come out again to vote. Using the slogan, "A town is known by the

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22 L. J. Perry, "Reidsville Public Schools Among the Best in State," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, Fiftieth Anniversary Edition, 1938, D5; Educational Edition, *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, October 16, 1914, 3-1. State Superintendent of Public Instruction, "School Changes," *North Carolina Education*, September 1917, 14. The first five graduates of the Reidsville Graded School on Franklin Street (in 1902) finished a ten-year course. This requirement changed in 1917 when North Carolina mandated an eleventh year of schooling to qualify for graduation.

school it keeps," bond supporters educated voters about the large sums other North Carolina towns of similar size had approved. "North Carolina is moving forward educationally," they argued, and "Reidsville will not be left to bring up the rear." The bond vote was successful. A new stately Reidsville High School was constructed in 1922 and first utilized in the fall of 1923. This facility with fourteen classrooms would be among the first high schools in the state to be accredited and would become the flagship school of a system that prided itself on its "most modern educational facilities." The "large auditorium and gymnasium" of the white high school were of particular note. With such "invaluable" facilities, the entire community benefited from the "large stage" and "ample floor space" of the school's auditorium, where public meetings, plays, and concerts brought citizens together. The high school became well-known from the early 1920s on for its "high rank in outside activities," including band, chorus, and yearbook. By the mid-1930s, Reidsville High School employed eighteen of the total of forty-six white teachers in the city schools. Local school leaders were surprised in 1934, however, when a visiting schoolhouse planner and fire marshal inspected the Franklin Street School, being used for lower grades, in preparation for constructing additions to the property. Instead of approving the project, the state officials "condemned the entire building as being unsafe for use." At this point, school leaders decided that rather than replacing this one large facility with another like it, it would be best to build three smaller graded schools. A twelve-room school on the old Franklin Street site was constructed, along with a pair of eight-room buildings on Johnston Street and Park Drive, "so that the smaller children would not have such a long distance to travel going to and from school,"

the rationale that would be argued for admitting black children to these same schools during desegregation thirty years later.[23]

On the western side of the county, public schools in the villages of Madison and Mayodan also provided some educational advantages to their white students. In Madison, where private academies had operated throughout much of the nineteenth century, public schools were first chartered in 1907 and operated under this authorization until 1933 when a wider administrative unit was established that included some outlying rural townships. In 1913, a two-story school was built in Madison that had six teachers and could offer four years of high school instruction. Their superintendent, J. C. Lassiter, joined the district in 1915. A second multi-story brick facility to house Madison students was erected in the 1922-23 school year. School officials visiting from Raleigh described it as a "handsome new building" and praised Lassiter for the progress the Madison schools had made since he became superintendent. The even larger brick two-story Madison High School was built in 1931, "with the idea of offering to the school children of the city all of the equipment necessary in high school education." The facility had a separate auditorium, gymnasium, and cafeteria, as well as a science lab and home economics room. The approximately one thousand white students who were enrolled in

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23 "Reidsville Will Vote on $300,000 School Bonds," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, April 5, 1921, 1; "Register by the 14th of This Month for the School Bond Election May 24th," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, May 5, 1921, 1; "Reidsvillians Vote for School Bonds," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, May 27, 1921, 1; Minutes of Reidsville City Schools, Report of the Superintendent for 1920-1921, January 13, 1922; "Accredited Schools in South," *North Carolina Education*, March 1922, 19; "Total of 2,999 Were Enrolled in Reidsville Schools Last Year," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, August 30, 1934, E3; "State School News," *North Carolina Education*, May 1922, 14; L. J. Perry, "Reidsville Public Schools Among the Best in State," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, Fiftieth Anniversary Edition, 1938, D5. According to the March 1922 article, Reidsville High School was among the first group of North Carolina institutions admitted to the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, having met the requirements for "first class high school work."

the Madison District Schools of the mid-1930s had access to one high school and two elementary schools.[24]

Formal education for the children of the mill town of Mayodan started in 1898 with teacher Lucy W. Weathersbee at the Moravian Church. The Superintendent of Mayo Mills, W. C. Ruffin, was instrumental in bringing Weathersbee, an experienced teacher, from Elkin to Mayodan. The need for a teacher was great, as the first classes were filled with eighty students, both males and females. Classes were taught in a wing of the church until 1901 when a three-room frame building was constructed on Main Street and two more classrooms were later added. Weathersbee continued at the school, retiring as principal in 1912. She was followed by Mamie Bennett of Ruffin for six years, and then by Elliott Duncan, a recent graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1918. Except for five years when he taught in another community, Duncan remained at the school through the 1950s, and the facility was later named for him. In 1923, the county schools authorized $85,000 to build a consolidated school at Mayodan and the two-story brick main building was constructed the next year. The school graduated its first high school class in 1932. The Washington Mills Company, whose employees were significantly represented in the town's population, paid for a gymnasium to be added in 1933, and a high school wing was constructed in 1935. By the mid-1930s, white students

24 "News Notes from Rockingham County," *North Carolina Education*, April 1923, 21; Madison School System Complete," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, August 30, 1934, E6; Educational Edition, *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, October 16, 1914, 1-1 (Section 1, page 1); 2-7; see Minutes of the Madison City Schools, May 4,1953; and May 25, 1953; "Rockingham Co. Can Boast of Excellent Schools," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, Development Edition, August 1934, E5. Lassiter would be Superintendent of the Madison Schools for almost half a century—from 1915 until 1953.

in Mayodan had a modern, brick facility available to them and took a great deal of pride in the school.[25]

Rural White Education 1900-1920

Educational facilities for many white rural students looked quite different from those of the towns in the early years of the new century. In the mid-1910s, the rural school-age population (at this point all those outside the Reidsville district) numbered just over eleven thousand. Nearly three-fourths of rural residents were white, but schools for both races were quite similar at this point—mainly one-teacher buildings along country roads. Many were concerned about rural conditions in the early 1900s. In observance of "Neighborhood and School Day," declared in December 1914 by North Carolina Governor Locke Craig, local citizens were urged to clean up their homes and yards, as well as the grounds around their churches and neighborhood schools. Rockingham County residents were encouraged to clean up the rubbish, weeds, and "half rotten stuff" near their homes. Instead of being cluttered, country school grounds, on the other hand, were often bare and muddy; these could be improved, it was suggested, by community leagues in each area, who ideally would have a local woman as president.[26]

In addition to clean-up efforts, local leaders employed several other strategies as they undertook a broad improvement campaign in the rural white schools during the 1910s. Some of these small schools should have been consolidated, one educator

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25 E. F. Duncan, "Mayodan Schools Grow with the Community," *Madison* (NC) *Messenger*, May 12, 1949, 12; "Mayodan: The First 100 Years," Calendar, Madison, NC: Wright Printing Service, 1999.

26 E. S. Millsaps, "Governor Craig's Appeal for Observance of the 'Neighborhood and School Day,'" 3-1, *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, October 16, 1914; "Statistical Report of the Public Schools," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, October 16, 1914, 2-6; Forty-six of 79 white schoolhouses and 28 of 37 schools for blacks were one-room buildings.

commented, “but quite a few of them will remain as they are for years to come.” One tactic aimed at improving the forty-two one-room white schools operating in 1914 was the “Standard School” movement. Being named a “Standard School” meant that it had met a large number of requirements—among them at least high school equivalency for the teacher, “suitable desks,” an average attendance of 80 percent, an “ample playground,” a set of “good maps, a globe and dictionaries,” and “two well kept, widely separated outhouses.” If these and other attributes were achieved, the school would have a sign announcing “Standard School” placed above the entryway, students would take more pride in their place of study, proponents said, and then certificates would be awarded to them at the year-end countywide commencement as having attended a school of this status. One new building, the Reid School House, was deemed the “ideal place for a standard school,” with its two-acre lot and a promise by the Civic League in Reidsville to help beautify the yard and install a playground. A second strategy to make rural white schools better was the County Commencement celebration itself, through which educational officials sought to bring uniformity and promote excellence in the county schools. Prize-winning exhibits and presentations of pupils’ work in essays, oratory, spelling, and other academic areas were honored with students, teachers, and parents from all seventy-nine of the white public schools invited to attend. The Ruffin Graded School also implemented its own initiative with “credit points” for self-improvement. If a student earned twenty-five credit points through “useful” activities, such as a young woman making a dress all on her own, then her grade average was raised by two points. A third path to better white education was a general campaign of information to appeal to

"all good citizens everywhere," teaching them what it took to maintain each building and improve the schools. Urging country people to take more pride in their schools, Superintendent L. N. Hickerson outlined in lengthy articles for the local paper many points of what he considered good educational policy, among them explaining what was expected of teachers, how to keep the school houses in good condition, and why purchasing desks of the proper size was essential.[27]

The most effective plan to improve rural education, however, was the spread of special tax districts, which allowed communities to raise funds for their own schools and for local committees to allot the funds where needed. Until 1907, special tax districts in towns were the only entities allowed to establish public high schools, but in this year, the General Assembly enacted legislation that allowed high schools to be established in rural districts as well. By the mid-1910s, a number of white districts in Rockingham County had voted to become special tax districts, one being the Simpsonville Township, District 4, where with the extra funds, patrons had made their distinctive three-room Cross Keys School, with a central tower and hip-roof, into an almost new structure. With this special tax, some, like patrons of the Matrimony School in Price Township, built onto existing houses. In 1914, the school, with the "whole community behind" it, had "two recitation rooms with two good teachers." Several other communities, being special tax districts, built new larger schools, most of the time right next to their old one-room buildings. The Case School House in Madison Township boasted of its "prosperous two-room" white

27 "Standard School," 2-2; "Reid School House," 3-1; "Some of the Prize Winning Pupils and Exhibits of the County Commencement," 2-1; "Statistical Report of the Public Schools," 2-6; "Ruffin Graded School," 1-5; "What Teachers, Patrons and Committee Can Do To Make the Rural Schools Better," 1-1, 2-5; all in *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, October 16, 1914.

frame building that had replaced an old "box-car shaped" one-room structure, while Sadler Graded School and Sharon Graded School both were able to grow to three-room facilities with the special tax funds. Both these rural schools now had additional music rooms and Sadler even touted its ownership of a piano for student instruction. Probably no county rural school in a special tax district offered more educational opportunities than did the Bethany School. In its five-year existence offering both lower grades and high school courses, by 1914 Bethany had educated at least "75 country boys and girls" who would likely have never gone beyond the seventh grade without access to their school.[28]

The town/rural divide was most distinct in access to high school instruction. Overall, there was more of a push to provide arts and classical academic coursework for whites than for African Americans in the 1900s and 1910s, but there was also a strong emphasis on vocational education for both races well into mid-century. Agriculture was a primary focus of county educators, especially in the rural schools. In the 1910s, there was much interest in establishing a "Farm Life" school, but no such facility was built. It was promoted as a "first class" high school for whites with a demonstration farm. Not everyone goes to college, school leaders acknowledged, and they sought more "scientific and practical training" for both sexes. To develop white rural high schools, in 1922, the State Board of Education set aside some limited funds to assist educational districts in establishing "standard" rural high schools, with the goal of at least one per county. This status meant that the school should offer four years of instruction in eight-month terms,

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28 "History of Education in North Carolina," State Department of Public Instruction, 1993, 12; "Cross Keys School," 2-2; "Matrimony School," 3-3; "Case School House," 1-1; "Sadler Graded School," Sharon Graded School," 3-1; "Bethany High School," 1-3; all in *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, October 16, 1914.

have an average daily attendance of at least forty-five students, and employ at least three full-time teachers. In 1922, a petition "numerously signed" was presented to the county school board requesting that a high school be placed in the center of the county. The board voted to appropriate $25,000 for the construction of the school and asked the county commissioners to give about fifty acres on the "Reidsville-Wentworth proposed hard-surfaced road" for the building. The three-story Wentworth School, which opened at this site in 1923, became an integral part of that community and was called "one of the largest and finest consolidated schools of Rockingham County." In quick order, the Rockingham County system was able to open two more high schools in the villages of Mayodan and Stoneville, as well as two other high schools in the rural areas of Bethany and Ruffin. In these five high schools of the rural county system, there were seven hundred students enrolled in 1934. Four of the five attained state accreditation in the mid-1920s, while Mayodan earned this status in 1932.[29]

The construction of these rural and small-town high schools was part of the movement consolidating districts and schools for white students, which took hold in North Carolina in the 1920s. A tremendous fervor for these projects was seen especially in nearby Surry County in 1921, when the hundreds gathered for their end-of-year county commencement "met with enthusiastic endorsement" a plan to consolidate ninety-nine

29 "What the Farm-Life School Means to the Boys and Girls of Rockingham County," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, October 16, 1914, 2-1; "One Standard Public High School for Every County," *North Carolina Education*, May 1922, 1; "County High School in Rockingham," *North Carolina Education*, May 1922, 17; "Rockingham Co. Can Boast of Excellent Schools," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, Development Edition, August 1934, E5; "History of Wentworth Elementary School," Rockingham County (NC) Schools, https://www.rock.k12.nc.us/domain/879; *Educational Directory of North Carolina*, 1949-50, 91. Stoneville earned this status in 1923. Ruffin, Wentworth, and Bethany were accredited in 1925.

schools into thirty-seven larger ones. To carry out this ambitious plan, anticipating that each of the new buildings would cost on average of $10,000 each, the county board appointed committees for the fourteen townships, each consisting of three citizens with a novel membership: "a Republican, a Democrat, and a woman." Instead of having different school districts for every community, administering the schools would be more streamlined with fewer units and committees. The proponents of larger consolidated schools argued that pupils in these facilities had more regular attendance and, since the teachers' duties could be divided among many, students received more "actual teaching." In the early 1920s, there was a great deal of consolidation talk in Rockingham County as well. Proponents of merging districts were especially interested in furthering high school education and argued that central high schools would be far more efficient than the limited coursework available at small country schools. During this decade, the consolidation process was led by county superintendent L. N. Hickerson and picked up in 1929 by the new school leader, J. E. McLean.[30]

The consolidation of the rural facilities started in 1920 with a "complete survey" of the schools, completed by Duke University professor A. M. Proctor. To finance the plan, the county issued bonds and borrowed from the state and built its first consolidated school in the Intelligence community on the site of the old Sharp Institute. In quick succession, throughout the mid-1920s, larger consolidated schools were built in

30 "Pith and Paragraph," *North Carolina Education*, May 1921, 12; Joshua Corbett Colley, "A Plan for Consolidation of Negro Schools in Rockingham County, North Carolina" (master's thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1944), 3; "Hickerson Re-Elected County Superintendent," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, April 22, 1921, 1; J. E. McLean, "County Has an Enrollment of 15,700 Students," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, Fiftieth Anniversary Edition, 1938, E4.

Wentworth, Stoneville, Mayodan, Ruffin, and Bethany. Some were completed in the Leaksville Township during these years as well and overseen by county school officials. However, as the Depression hit the area, the consolidation movement stopped, leaving thirty-five small one and two teacher schools for whites still operating in rural areas of the county. Then, after the state took more responsibility for education in 1933 and declared the "county" the central educational entity in North Carolina, local school leaders resumed their consolidation efforts. Favorable financing through the federal government made the early 1930s "a good time to finish the consolidation program," recalled Superintendent McLean. With a combined appropriation from the Public Works Administration (PWA), an additional government grant, and the sale of school bonds amounting to more than a half million dollars, the Rockingham County schools completed their campaign of school building and facility improvements for rural white students. This infusion of funds primarily from the federal government allowed Rockingham County to complete nineteen separate projects, building or improving schools from Draper, Burton Grove, North Spray and Lakeside in the Leaksville township to all areas of the county, including Madison, Mayodan, Stoneville, and Huntsville in the western section and Williamsburg and Ruffin in the outlying rural areas around Reidsville.

Although most of the small white schools in the county system had been consolidated by the mid-1930s, there was still a five-teacher school at Sadler, as well as nine two-teacher schools and eight one-teacher schools for whites still operating in 1934. By 1938, however, the approximately seventy-five one and two teacher schools for

whites that had existed in the county in 1920 had been reduced to ten modern plants. County Superintendent J. E. McLean was "very gratified" that this major building effort started by the county system in earnest in 1922, a plan to "eliminate every small school for white children within its bounds," had brought so many improvements. Before consolidation, many white students had had to use "unsanitary toilets and open wells or springs for drinking water," but afterward, all white schools had "clean pure deep well water to drink and sanitary toilets to use." Despite criticisms that consolidation had broken up communities, Superintendent McLean argued that now the larger buildings were actually being used as community centers and each of the consolidated schools had "active wide awake" parent-teacher groups. The main problem facing the white schools of the county on the eve of World War II, according to the superintendent, was serious overcrowding at several facilities. Students were staying in school longer and even the Wentworth School, that when built seemed "it would never be filled," was so "full of children" that even the shower rooms in the basement were being used for classes. It would be expensive to make the continued improvements, he conceded, but it was not fair to crowd children into "basements, auditoriums, small rooms, [and] unhealthy conditions."[31]

As communities worked to expand educational opportunities, having sufficient numbers of reasonably qualified teachers was a concern for Rockingham County, as it

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31 J. E. McLean, "County Has an Enrollment of 15,700 Students," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, Fiftieth Anniversary Edition, 1938, E4; "554,000.00 Is Now Available for Completion of County's Big School Building Program," *Leaksville* (NC) *News,* July 12, 1934, 1; "Contracts for Twelve County School Building Projects Will Be Let Tues. Morning, Aug. 28," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, August 9, 1934, 1, 4; "Rockingham Co. Can Boast of Excellent Schools," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, Development Edition, August 1934, E5.

was in the entire state during the years of building the public school system. To better prepare teachers, a series of summer training institutes were regularly held in the county for both black and white instructors. In 1909, a state education publication noted the outstanding attendance of Rockingham teachers at the most recent Institute. "All of the teachers of the county were present except four; and two of these were sick in bed," wrote the editor. "How many counties can show such a record?" By 1921, state oversight and further organization of public schools at the county level led to eighty-six counties holding summer schools to train white teachers. Leaksville-Spray Superintendent P. H. Gwynn was the director of Rockingham County's summer school. However, some local policies on teacher hiring may have hindered the placement of otherwise qualified teachers in classrooms. In 1925, the Reidsville Board voted to prohibit married [female] teachers (others than those married women already employed) "to teach in the white schools of the Reidsville system." If a single female teacher married during the school year, she would be terminated at the end of the academic session. Apparently, married black females were not included in the prohibition. Further, no one related to a school board member "by blood or marriage" could be elected as a teacher. In Leaksville, despite their experience in the system, a number of teachers were not rehired in 1930 because they had "made no effort to raise their Certificates." The Leaksville Board joined Reidsville in 1931 in their decision not to hire married women

teachers, announcing that the "contract of any female teacher be automatically cancelled if she marries," but this order was rescinded in 1933 as the Depression deepened.[32]

White Solidarity and Racial Politics 1910-1940

The development of the schools in Rockingham County in the first decades of the twentieth century took place against the backdrop of a strengthening sense of racial division in the state and region. Growing out of the white supremacy campaigns of 1898 and after, a set of Jim Crow laws were enacted and other "customs" of racial hierarchy became more entrenched in southern society. As did the majority of North Carolinians, Rockingham County voters continued to cast their ballots for white Democrats across the board, some of whom were direct beneficiaries of the earlier disfranchisement campaign. At this point in southern history, two generations removed from secession and battlefields, much of the former Confederacy had fully embraced the rhetoric of the Lost Cause. Whites found it powerful in expressing what had become over time their understanding of the South's role in the Civil War. Of course, this narrative eliminated slavery as a cause of the war and pushed African Americans out of the history. The culmination of several decades of building white solidarity around the Lost Cause narrative could be seen locally. In the early twentieth century there were very active chapters of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) in Rockingham County, which led their communities in showing great reverence for the veterans of the Confederacy. Many notices appeared in the local papers letting veterans know of various

32 "Institute of Rockingham County," *North Carolina Education*, September 1909, 16; State Superintendent of Public Instruction, "County Summer Schools for White Teachers for 1921," *North Carolina Education,* June 1921, 3; Minutes of Reidsville City Schools, May 1, 1925; Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, May 13, 1930; January 13, 1931; and July 24, 1933.

reunions that they might attend, and railways offered special discounts and routes for those traveling to these gatherings. Special memories of the Civil War experience were carried and retold for decades, as in the late 1930s, when a ninety-two-year-old veteran spoke to the local Lions Club of his experiences as a Confederate soldier and his "wonderful trip" to the Blue and Gray reunion in Gettysburg. He had enjoyed talking to the "Yankee veterans," he told club members, and found them to be "God-fearing and Christian gentlemen just as we have in the South." He also recalled his march of several days to arrive in Appomattox at the surrender and the "long and tiresome journey" home. Efforts to keep alive such memories were evident in the frequent meetings of the chapters of the UDC in the county and in interviews with aging veterans that appeared in local newspapers.[33]

The zenith of area white pride was expressed with the unveiling of a statue dedicated "to Rockingham's Confederate dead" in Reidsville in 1910. Located in a prominent location just up the street from the black school and African American residences and at an entrance to a main business section of town, the "handsome monument" of a single soldier was paid for and erected through the efforts of the UDC. The unveiling was truly a historic event for the town and for the entire area, warranting a

33 Link, *North Carolina: Change and Tradition*, 278-9; "Daughter of Confederacy," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, May 6, 1904, 3; "Daughters of Confederacy Meeting," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, May 30, 1905, 3; "Localettes," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, April 4, 1905, 3; "Localettes," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, May 26, 1905, 3; "Confederate Veteran Tells Lions of His Recent Trip to Reunion in Gettysburg," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, July14, 1938, 1; Lindley S. Butler, *Rockingham County: A Brief History* (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History), 52; for a critically acclaimed analysis of the Lost Cause and the reconciliation of whites of both North and South, see David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001). As noted by Butler, one of these veterans was the first superintendent of the Rockingham County Schools, N. S. Smith, a survivor of the Cemetery Ridge offensive at Gettysburg.

special issue of the local newspaper. For many days leading up to the event, area merchants advertised their wares and invited visitors as well as local citizens to come into their stores for special welcomes and values. One men's clothier invited "every one for miles around" to attend the unveiling, as Reidsville opened "her gates, her homes, her hearts." The monument told the world, the advertisement read, "that we still honor the boys who defended Southern Rights." An "immense throng," nearing seven thousand, made their way to Reidsville for a procession of horses and carriages and a program that focused on the "beloved commander," Robert E. Lee, and the "patriotic devotion" of aging Confederate veterans. One speaker explained the origins of the Civil War as the North's determination "to send armed forces into the South for the purpose of coercion and subjugation." He blamed Union leaders such as Sherman and Sheridan, who had shocked the "civilized world" with their "atrocities." The ladies of the UDC were lauded as "noble, loving, and self-sacrificing" for their work in erecting the monument, as Reidsville mayor, Francis Womack, accepted the "magnificent gift" on behalf of the "entire citizenship." The unveiling was, indeed, a glorious and meaningful day for the white population of Rockingham County.[34]

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34 "Advertisement for S. S. Harris," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, June 28, 1910, 2; "Monument Unveiled," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review,* July 1, 1910, 1; For more on the history of the Reidsville Confederate Monument, later controversies, and its removal, see "There Was Great Crowd at Monument Unveiling," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, June 30, 1910, 1, 3; Billie Jacobs Wright, "Reidsville Confederate Monument Defies Effort To Have It Moved," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*," April 25, 1948, 15; Janice Heller, "Reidsville's Stone Soldier—Reb or Yank?" *Greensboro* (NC) *News and Record*, April 18, 1987, 25; "Driver Who Struck Confederate Monument: 'I'm Sorry,'" WXII, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, May 23, 2011; Danielle Battaglia, "Reidsville Confederate Monument Reignites Controversy, *The News & Advance* (Lynchburg, VA), September 25, 2011, https://www.newsadvance.com/rockingham_now/news/reidsville-confederate-monument-reignites-controversy/article_30718957-412d-52d5-ace7-546a09393c76.html; Danielle Battaglia, "Reidsville Confederate Monument Still Divides Community," *Greensboro* (NC) *News and Record*, July 2, 2014, https://www.greensboro.com/rockingham_now/reidsville-confederate-monument-still-divides-

African Americans, however, had a very different understanding of the war and its aftermath. Largely relegated to the status of second-class citizens, blacks in the county experienced the early decades of the twentieth century in very different ways from their white neighbors. The overall black population in Rockingham County dropped from 40 percent in 1890 to 29 percent in 1910, possibly the result of migration out of the area in response to the disfranchisement amendment and the triumph of the white supremacy campaign at the state level. The African American population in the Reidsville area, however, increased by about seven hundred in the first decade of the new century, and in 1910, blacks made up 39 percent of the local citizenry. Jim Crow restrictions became a way of life for Rockingham County citizens; racial separation was expected by whites and experienced daily by blacks. African Americans were reminded of their "place" in the local economy and society by advertisements such as the announcement of a land auction in 1913. In a half-page ad, along with the descriptions of five tracts to be sold, all more than fifty acres each, and an offer of a "Big Brunswick Stew" to accompany the exciting auction, came the statement, "No sale will be made to colored people." Even if black citizens had had the means to purchase some of this "well-watered" and "wooded" land, "good small farms," suitable for growing all the regional crops—wheat, corn, tobacco and clover—they were denied that opportunity. Yet, African Americans in the county continued to build their communities and maintained their customs, as evidenced by the celebration of the 62nd anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation in Reidsville

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community/article_1eec0c0a-019d-11e4-a3c5-001a4bcf6878.html; Justyn Melrose, "Artwork To Replace Confederate Monument Goes Up in Reidsville," *RockinghamNow.com*, April 5, 2016, https://www.greensboro.com/news/artwork-to-replace-confederate-monument-goes-up-in-reidsville/article_d388e009-0b3e-5a28-b389-94fb97d8223f.html.

in 1925. Because of icy weather, participants left off the "usual parade" but held exercises led by R. S. Taylor in the Washington High School auditorium. Baltimore attorney, L. G. Koger, a former Reidsville resident, gave an "able address."[35]

Still, African American citizens in the county were no doubt alarmed by the size of the crowd, estimated to be about ten thousand, as the Ku Klux Klan was welcomed onto the streets of Reidsville for a 1927 rally. Held on a summer night and partially lit by the electric lights of automobiles in the procession, the main event was a parade that involved a hearty participation of local officials and use of city resources. As the city streets filled hours ahead of time in anticipation of the parade, Klan members from the Greensboro, Reidsville, Leaksville-Spray, and Danville klaverns, numbering about seven hundred in all, assembled in the auditorium of the municipal building. The parade was then led through the town by two municipal officers in "the police motor car." Following them were KKK members in full regalia on horseback, "the horses with their trapping on," and the uniformed Klan cornet band from Danville, Virginia. Following the band, which played "Dixie" and "Onward Christian Soldiers," were "decorated automobiles with electric lights shining through the crosses" ahead of them. Finally, the seven hundred Klansmen marched in files. Hundreds from the crowd followed them to the

35 "Rockingham County, North Carolina Population by Race," *Social Explorer*, https://www.socialexplorer.com/ a9676d974c/explore; "Negro Population of Urban Communities in NC: 1910 and 1900," in *The Heritage of Blacks in North Carolina, Volume I,* 1990, Philip N. Henry and Carol M. Speas, eds. (Charlotte, NC: The North Carolina African American Heritage Foundation, 1990), 23; Original source: Negro Population, 1790-1915, Bureau of Census, United States Department of Commerce, Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1918. "Auction Sale of Land," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, August 8, 1913, 5. "Local News," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, January 2, 1925. The census showed 1,206 blacks in Reidsville in 1900, and 1,903 of a total population of 4,828 in 1910.

town's ball park, which was already nearly full. There they witnessed the ceremonies led by Exalted Cyclop Garrett of Danville. Sixty-seven new members were added to the Klan and the crowd heard a sermon from a Greensboro pastor about what the Klan stood for—supporting law enforcement, the church, and the less fortunate. The "fiery cross burning" with which the ceremony concluded added "solemnity" to what the local paper called "the most spectacular event ever held in Reidsville." The evening was certainly a testament to the intensity of white supremacy in the area and the extent to which the Klan was accepted as mainstream and even a desirable element in the community.[36]

Black Education, 1900-1930s

By the time of this large Klan rally in the late 1920s, a firmly segregated educational system reflected the building of Jim Crow structures that would mark the county throughout much of the twentieth century. Within this segregated framework, the black citizens of Rockingham County worked to create effective educational institutions of their own. Whereas in the first decade of the new century, most white and black schools were similarly constructed one or two-teacher buildings scattered along rural roads, by the 1920s, white schools had largely been consolidated in brick, multi-story schools in the towns and union schools in the rural sections. Larger faculties and more resources defined these white schools, while many schools for blacks continued in inadequate buildings with single teachers. The divide between towns and countryside became less pronounced in the white schools but remained distinct in black communities.

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36 "K. K. Klan Pulls Off a Big Event in Reidsville," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, June 29, 1927, 1. The local custom of sharing a Brunswick stew followed this KKK parade and rally, as the Klansmen were fed before they disbanded around 11 p.m.

In the first two decades of the century, nevertheless, some limited efforts were made to improve the rural buildings and the instruction of African American students enrolled there. Three new buildings were constructed for black students in the 1913 school year, for instance, replacing one-room with two-teacher schools. One of these was the new two-room Sadler building, which was called the "most beautiful in architecture . . . of any colored school in the county." With a large enrollment of over eighty pupils, students there were happy to have a large map of the United States that had been obtained through the efforts of their Senator, and parents in that community worked with the teachers to raise some money for "papers, books, and pencils." Society at large still worked to maintain the availability of black laborers for agriculture and schooling for African Americans in the South during the Jim Crow decades emphasized agricultural and domestic training. This situation was not entirely true for all rural black students in Rockingham County, but there was evidence of emphasis on these skills. At Sadler Colored School, for instance, the girls were organized into a "Tomato Club," while a farmer offered a small plot of land nearby so that both boys and girls could have "an early potato patch." Still, at this time, Sadler offered perhaps one of the best educational opportunities for rural black students in the area. School patrons were praised for their enthusiasm and being "ready to help as far as they are able."[37]

On the western side of the county, African Americans in the Madison area were also active in assuring their own education. There, the black community had supported

37 "Sadler Colored School," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, October 16, 1914, 1-4; see James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

their own schools since the 1870s and 1880s, beginning with a three-month subscription school taught by Milton Stamps, a white man, at his home and in an old house at the corner of Franklin and Decatur streets in Madison known as the "Third and Fourth Readers." The first public schools known in this area were taught by Jane Richardson and her daughter Emma. Another county public school for black students operated from 1892 to 1904 in a two-room log building on Idol Street in Madison, until overcrowding prompted John Martin and seventeen other black men from the community to purchase a larger meeting place. Pooling their resources, these men bought a former warehouse, a two-story frame building on Decatur Street, and started a subscription-funded school. The school later became part of the county public system. Called "Old Hall," this building had six classrooms on the first floor, usually staffed by three to five teachers, while the second floor was designated as the lodge hall of the Knights of Pythias, a black fraternal and service organization. For twenty years, 1904 to 1924, African American students in the Madison area attended school at "Old Hall." Yet, even with a few schools like those in Madison and in the Sadler community that offered instruction from more than one teacher (nine of thirty-seven), there were none in the county in 1914, in either towns or rural settings, that offered any high school-level classes for African Americans.[38]

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38 Eudoxia Dalton, interview by author, July 20, 2016; Charles Rodenbough and Jean Rodenbough, *Town of Madison: A Heritage to Honor*, 1818-1968 (Madison, NC: Madison Sesquicentennial Commission, Inc., 1968), 19, DigitalNC, https://library.digitalnc.org/cdm/ref/collection/booklets/id/45694. "Statistical Report of the Public Schools," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, October 16, 1914, 2-6. Mrs. Dalton, a former teacher in both segregated and integrated local schools, acts as a historian for her community and has created a detailed chart about the history of black education in the Madison area where she grew up. She, Betsy Franklin, and other local historians compiled oral histories and documented details into a history of black education in the Madison area.

The first school in the county to offer high school courses for black students was in Reidsville, the town with the largest proportion of black citizens among its population. Small public schoolhouses in the Reidsville area had operated since the 1880s as part of the original school districts formed after Reconstruction. The first graded school for black students in Reidsville, a two-story frame structure built in the early 1900s, was originally across the street from the American Tobacco Company. After it was destroyed by fire in the late 1910s, the first Booker T. Washington School was built on the same site. During this construction period, classes were held in houses rented nearby. The new facility, which would become the educational anchor for African Americans in Reidsville and the surrounding communities, was completed in June 1921 at a cost of approximately $50,000 and called "one of the nicest school buildings for blacks in North Carolina." As school population increased, however, more room was needed for students in the lower grades, who also attended the school. Local school officials worked with an architect to plan for the construction of eight additional classrooms to the facility, only to be met with opposition from white Reidsville citizens who lived near the Washington School. Several speeches before the school board revealed that the residents of the North End wanted this new "colored school" built in some other part of town, not their own. Prior to construction, the board instructed black Principal J. A. McRae to take a census of the "colored school population" to determine the need for the school, but ultimately, the board complied with the protesters' wishes, obtained land on Branch Street, and built a separate black elementary school there. The facility was ready for inspection in July 1925 and the board authorized its opening if the building met with McRae's approval. A

leaking roof at the new Branch Street School only a few months later, however, prompted officials to consult with the builder.[39]

Since there were no rural high schools for African Americans in the county, many pupils from outlying areas came into Reidsville to attend Washington; as a result, the school became an integral part of the wider black community. During its first decades, Washington High School thrived under the leadership of strong black principals. In 1923, the first "distinctly public high schools" for black students not "connected with institutions of higher learning" were accredited. Washington in Reidsville was among them, the first institution for African Americans to be accredited in the county, and one of the first ten such schools in the state to belong to the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools (SACS). Only three others—Oxford's Mary Potter High School, William Penn High School in High Point, and Atkins High School in Winston-Salem—earned statewide accreditation earlier.[40]

Led by Principal McRae throughout the twenties and much of the next decade, the Reidsville school had an enrollment of 220 in 1934. Having increased from a total of

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39 "Negro Population of Urban Communities in NC: 1910 and 1900," in *The Heritage of Blacks in North Carolina, Volume I,* 1990, eds. Henry and Speas, 23; Original source: Negro Population, 1790-1915, Bureau of Census, United States Department of Commerce, Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1918. See Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, various dates, 1877-1885; Walt Wintermute, "County Schools for Black Students Bring Back Memories," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, May 31, 1985, 3; Minutes of Reidsville Schools, Superintendent's Report for 1920-1921, January 13, 1922; March 8, 1923; April 24, 1923; June 20, 1923; July 23, 1925; and February 11, 1926. As noted earlier, African Americans made up about 40 percent of the Reidsville area's population in 1910. C. C. Watkins, black supervisor of the county schools for several decades, recalled in the 1985 interview that the fire happened in the afternoon after school had been let out and that no one was hurt.

40 "Graded School for Negroes," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, Fiftieth Anniversary Edition, 1938, D5; Wiley Britton Sanders, *Negro Child Welfare in North Carolina: A Rosenwald Study,* North Carolina State Board of Charities and Public Welfare (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1933), 307; *Educational Directory of North Carolina*, *1949-1950*, 59, 63, 65, 92.

thirteen African American teachers in 1921, there were twenty-eight black teachers in the Reidsville system in the mid-1930s with eight of these at the high school level. Samuel Edward Duncan followed McRae as principal at Washington in 1938. Having served as a teacher and coach in Reidsville at the beginning of his career, earned a master's degree, and gained experience as a principal, Duncan and his teacher wife, Ida Hauser Duncan, returned to the area, where they provided years of valuable service to the Reidsville schools. While Duncan was principal, the administration of the local black schools was left largely to him and other black leaders with minimal oversight by the white school board. Both Duncans became noted educators across the state, serving on boards and as officers in statewide organizations. Duncan left Reidsville in 1946 to serve as supervisor of North Carolina's Negro schools and, after earning his doctorate from Cornell, became president of Livingston College in Salisbury. In later years, Duncan also served as president of the North Carolina Council of Churches and was a member of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission. There is little doubt that during these years the Booker T. Washington High School and the other black schools of the Reidsville district benefited from outstanding leadership and played a crucial role in the education of thousands of the region's black citizens. In size and number of students taught, however, few black institutions could compare to Atkins High School in Winston-Salem. By the 1930s, Atkins, perhaps the flagship high school for North Carolina's African Americans, was valued at $350,000 and boasted sixty classrooms.[41]

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41 L. J. Perry, "Reidsville Public Schools Among the Best in State," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, Fiftieth Anniversary Edition, 1938, D5; "Total of 2,999 Were Enrolled in Reidsville Schools Last Year," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, August 30, 1934, E3; *Educational Directory of North Carolina*, *1943-1944*, 19; *Educational Directory of North Carolina*, *1947-1948*, 22-23; Lois V. Edinger, "Samuel Edward

Rosenwald Schools

Not all African Americans in Rockingham County had access in this period to schools such as those in Reidsville. While whites were consolidating their schools, building more and larger modern brick facilities and expanding instruction, many black citizens of the county were left behind in one-room school houses or with little practical access to formal education at all. The building of ten Rosenwald schools in Rockingham County during the 1910s and 1920s markedly improved education for African Americans in the area. A Rosenwald School was a "rural, public school for Negroes that was built with aid from the Julius Rosenwald Fund." The effort was initiated cooperatively by famed black educator, Booker T. Washington, and white philanthropist, Julius Rosenwald, head of Sears-Roebuck retail enterprises. Rosenwald was concerned about the lack of educational opportunities for southern blacks and in the mid-1910s had worked with Washington and others in Tuskegee to fund a number of schools in the Deep South. After the educator's death in 1915, Rosenwald established his fund, which ultimately provided seed money for more than fifty-three hundred structures across the South, buildings that became powerful symbols of African American advancement in a time when many faced growing white hostility. Over about fifteen years, the building program offered uniform architectural plans for schools housing from one to seven teachers and appropriated monies based on the number of classrooms in each facility.

Duncan, Jr.," *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*: Vol. 2, 120; Sanders, *Negro Child Welfare in North Carolina,* 311. The minutes of the local school board have very few references to Duncan or to any activities or board actions involving the African American schools during the years of Duncan's tenure, suggesting that the white school board left black school leaders to oversee their own schools. The value of Atkins High School was increased by a $50,000 contribution from the Rosenwald Fund.

Local black citizens were required to make contributions to the effort and the public school board in each location was expected to pay the largest portion of construction costs. The entire endeavor was ideally to be "a community enterprise," cooperatively accomplished and bringing greater racial understanding. By the time the Rosenwald Fund closed its accounts in 1932, it had helped construct 813 buildings, which included 787 school houses, 18 homes for teachers, and 8 vocational shops in North Carolina, more than in any other state.[42]

Constructing the earliest of the ten schools built in Rockingham County was truly a cooperative effort among not only the Rosenwald agents and other state officials, but also involving the county school superintendent L. N. Hickerson and local African Americans acting on their own behalf. Writing in April 1915, black citizens of the Moyer Town area near Spray told of very difficult circumstances. The letter, signed by thirty-one school patrons, was very respectfully written to the white superintendent, with phrases such as "if you would be so kind" and "if you see it reasonable." They explained that, as parents, they were very concerned that the only "school" available to them was one room "so small that it want [sic] hold half of our children." This one room, also, was so far distant from where they lived that their "little school age children" could not be

42 Fisk University Database of Rosenwald Schools, http://rosenwald.fisk.edu/; Credle Report July 1, 1921-July 1, 1922, Reports: Rosenwald Fund Reports, W. F. Credle, North Carolina Digital Collections, Department of Cultural Resources, http://digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm/ref/collection/p16062coll13/id/4756; Thomas W. Hanchett, "The Rosenwald Schools and Black Education in North Carolina," *The North Carolina Historical Review* 65, no. 4 (October 1988): 387, 396-98, 400, 408, 409. For a comprehensive study of the Rosenwald school building program, see Mary S. Hoffschwelle, *The Rosenwald Schools of the American South,* New Perspectives on the History of the South (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2006).

sent at all, especially in bad weather, since they would have to walk there. They asked for "two large rooms" that could house their eighty-five children to be built in their community. Please "move our shool dow in Moyer town as every body owns propt. here and exspect to be here all of our lives," they asked Hickerson. In the coming months, the superintendent went to work trying to secure some assistance for the people of Moyer Town. He wrote to the head of the Division of Negro Education, N. C. Newbold, that the school system could furnish "only part of the money to build the house," estimated at $600, but with some help could get it built by fall of that year. "The truth of the matter is, the negroes in this community near Spray have no house at all," Hickerson wrote, "and there is something like 90 or 100 negro children who ought to be in school." Two weeks later, the superintendent followed up with the state office, assuring the official, "It seems to me that if any community in the state needs any help this does." He also included a letter with the promise from the community's citizens of six days of labor, two days hauling with a "two horse team," and thirty dollars in pledges that the area's minister had collected. The reply from Newbold was that the citizens had not "made a very large offering in money or in labor." "If they really want a school," he replied, they would have to do more.[43]

Several months later, before resolving the first request, Hickerson again wrote to Newbold, asking for help from the Rosenwald Fund for a second district in the Leaksville

43 Moyer Town Citizens to L. N. Hickerson, April 6, 1915; L. N. Hickerson to N. C. Newbold, September 29, 1915; L. N. Hickerson to N.C. Newbold, October 12, 1915; State Agent of Rural Schools to L. N. Hickerson, October 14, 1915, all in Box 2, Folder H, Department of Public Instruction, Division of Negro Education, General Correspondence of Director, September 1915-August 1916, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, North Carolina. The name of this school is spelled both "Moyer" and "Moir" in school records.

Township where the residents had only a "very shabby worn out school building." "I do not know of a district where some help would do more good than here," Hickerson added. Once again, he included a proposed list of contributions from the black community there—including hauling, carpentry labor, and small donations ranging from a quarter to $15.00 from more than forty residents. Still, the state director was not satisfied with the "rather small contributions" of the black citizens but promised that he would try to see that some money come to the county because of the superintendent's advocacy, suggesting perhaps a contribution to Rockingham County of $350 that might be used for building at the local school board's discretion. Superintendent Hickerson continued his correspondence with Newbold, expressing his enthusiasm for building "four colored school houses in this county this year." With the assistance of the Rosenwald program, Hickerson was hopeful that the local board could be persuaded to follow this plan. He followed up with Raleigh officials with a more limited request in August 1916, however, for $250 that could help with "two houses that it seems absolutely necessary for us to have built this summer." Finally, after about a year and a half of requests and responses, including some negotiation about adding small rooms (of about 12 by 14 feet) for "industrial work," such as cooking and sewing, the Rosenwald Fund did appropriate $300 for the construction of the one-teacher Springfield School in the Leaksville Township. Of the Rosenwald schools built in Rockingham County, all but three were one and two-teacher structures such as Springfield. These schools spread across the county—Sadler, Garrett Grove, Wentworth, Elm Grove, Hayes Chapel, and Blue Creek—were all small facilities financed in part by the fund, but they were greatly

needed and appreciated in their communities. One former student at Hayes Chapel recalled that she had especially inspiring experiences at the one-teacher school in the Intelligence community near Madison. With her siblings, she eagerly walked across fields and the countryside finding the shortest path to the rural school, where her teacher engaged the students in song and dance to accompany the lessons.[44]

It is clear from numerous sources, including the letters of black citizens to their Rockingham County school superintendent, why a program such as the Rosenwald Fund was needed in 1920s North Carolina. The isolation of many rural blacks often meant that no school was close enough for children to walk there. Of course, this situation also meant that many African American students were unable to attend on a regular basis, so absenteeism was an issue. The problem of poor attendance was also an economic problem for nearly all rural areas, where children had to do farm work. Seeing such poor attendance, some white superintendents then argued that there were not enough students to justify new, larger buildings or more teachers. Some of these issues burdened black citizens in Rockingham County as well. Although the African American population of Rockingham County had diminished in proportion to whites, down from 40 percent in 1890 to 24 percent thirty years later, close to eleven thousand black citizens still lived in

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44 L. N. Hickerson to N. C. Newbold, March 28, 1916; State Agent of Rural Schools to L. N. Hickerson, May 16, 1916; L. N. Hickerson to N. C. Newbold, May 18, 1916; State Agent of Rural Schools to L. N. Hickerson, August 16, 1916; L. N. Hickerson to N. C. Newbold, August 17, 1916; State Agent of Rural Schools to L. N. Hickerson, August 25, 1916; L. N. Hickerson to N. C. Newbold, August 29, 1916, all in Box 2, Folder H, Department of Public Instruction, Division of Negro Education, General Correspondence of Director, September 1915-August 1916, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, North Carolina; Springfield School, Rockingham County, North Carolina, Fisk University Rosenwald Database, http://rosenwald.fisk.edu/module=search.details&set_v=aWQ9Mjk3NQ==&school_county=Rockingham&school_state=NC&button=Search&o=0; Gladys M. McNatt, Eudoxia M. Dalton, and Dorothy M. James, interview by author, June 23, 2016.

the county in 1920, many in rural communities and, as evidenced in the letters to Superintendent Hickerson, many in poverty. Such poverty in the state was witnessed firsthand by Rosenwald representatives. In 1921, two assistants in the Division of Negro Education were added to the staff in Raleigh to oversee the growing Rosenwald building program—the white former superintendent of the Hyde County Schools, W. F. Credle, and an African American professor at Biddle University (later Johnson C. Smith), Dr. George Edward Davis. Both traveled across the state consulting with black citizens and local education officials about the needs of their counties and exhibited grave concern for the conditions under which many black youths attempted to get an education in the state. As Credle reported in May 1925, "A number of the colored schools in the State are housed in the most miserable huts." One building in Caswell County, for instance, which he helped to replace with one of the Rosenwald two-teacher designs, was "a log shack without any glass windows." Truly, there was a need in North Carolina for an accelerated school building campaign for black students.[45]

To construct the best facilities possible with limited resources, the program developed uniform and readily available school architectural plans based on research and consultation with authorities. One-story buildings were almost always planned, primarily because they were safer in a fire, but also because they were easier to organize and cost

45 W. F. Credle to N. C. Newbold, June 24, 1926, Correspondence: Rosenwald Fund, Box 2, Folder N, 1925-1926, North Carolina Digital Collections, Department of Cultural Resources, http://digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p16062coll13/id/385/rec/2; *Social Explorer*, U.S. Demography 1790 to Present, Rockingham County, North Carolina, 1920, https://www.socialexplorer.com; Hanchett, "The Rosenwald Schools," 409-411; Credle Report, May 1924, Reports: Rosenwald Fund Reports W. F. Credle, 1921-1929, http://digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm/ref/collection/p16062coll13/id/4756.

less to construct. There were several other physical requirements for each project: at least two acres of "well-drained land," a location on a public highway, a source of "pure drinking water," and grounds suitable for a playground and a school garden. All the Rosenwald schools had to have "two sanitary toilets" approved by local health officials and some had to get sunlight from either the east or west, so these architectural plans called for large windows to facilitate this requirement. Credle wrote, "With better school buildings and better homes we have a new type of Negro ever seeking an opportunity to educate himself and his children to the end that all may be better citizens."[46]

Three larger Rosenwald schools built in Rockingham County were, indeed, the vehicles to betterment for thousands of African American students and their families. Operated through the rural county system, the Stoneville Colored School in the small town of Stoneville less than ten miles from the Virginia state line was completed in 1923 at a total cost of $4,300. The only one of the ten Rockingham County Rosenwald schools to do so, the school received a $250 donation to its construction from whites in that community. Local black citizens contributed another $1,270, while $1,880 came from public coffers through the school budget. This three-teacher school provided classes for grades one through eight, and after black high schools were built in Madison and Leaksville later in the 1920s, most Stoneville students continued their education in one of

46 S. L. Smith to W. F Credle, September 12, 1923, Correspondence of Supervisor of the Rosenwald Fund, Division of Negro Education, North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction, Box 1, Folder S. L. Smith, Field Agent, June 1923-June 1924, North Carolina State Archives; *Community School Plans*, Bulletin No. 3, Julius Rosenwald Fund, Division of Negro Education, Department of Public Instruction Records, State Archives of North Carolina (1924), http://digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm/ref/collection/p16062coll13/id/4554; Credle Report July 1, 1921-July 1, 1922. In fact, windows in Rosenwald Schools had to be "at least forty inches from the floor and reach to within about six inches of a twelve foot ceiling."

the high schools in those towns. This Rosenwald school provided educational opportunities for African Americans in the northwestern area of the county for nearly three decades.[47]

The second largest of the Rosenwald projects in the county—the Madison Colored School—was completed in 1924. Estimating a total cost of $10,000, the county board decided three years earlier that "a school for the colored race should be built at Madison." Pursuing Rosenwald funds, county officials submitted the required applications to the appropriate authorities in Raleigh. Then, led by John Martin and Armsted Williams, African Americans in the Madison area came together as they had twenty years earlier to provide for their own educational advancement. With $1,000 they raised, the group bought five acres on the west end of Decatur Street, not far from the white Madison Elementary and Madison High School, for the location of a school of their own. This land purchase fulfilled the contribution of the black community required by the Rosenwald program. Teachers also financed the steam heat that was installed in the facility. The Rosenwald application was approved in January 1924 and the structure was completed two months later at a total cost of $15,000. While the Rosenwald contribution was at the set rate for six-teacher schools—$1,500—the public school system paid the bulk of the costs at $12,500. When state supervisor, W. F. Credle, sent a photograph of the new building to the Nashville headquarters of the Rosenwald Fund, the director there speculated that the structure "must be among your best frame buildings." Madison

47 Stoneville Colored School, Rockingham County, North Carolina, Fisk University Rosenwald Database, http://rosenwald.fisk.edu/?.

Colored School was built according to the six-teacher, 6-A architectural plan facing north with an entryway, six classrooms and a large space used for school assemblies and even for sports. Athletes from the early years recalled that even though the length of the space was short and the ceiling was low, they did play basketball there. At least, they recalled, their space did not have a stove in the middle, as was the case at a rival school's "home court." During the 1920s and 1930s, the Madison Colored School increasingly became the center of the black community. African American students from several areas in eastern Stokes County joined those from western Rockingham to study in Madison and were guided in these years by the Rev. W. B. Watts, Sam Penn, and C. U. DeBerry, principals. Enrollment in the lower grades was strong, growing by more than 70 in the early 1930s, to 242. An additional building (also with six classrooms) was moved in from the Dan Valley area to house high school classes in the mid-1930s, as the number of high school students increased from 20 in 1930 to 134 by the end of the decade. The first group of seven seniors completed their studies in 1937, but official "graduates" were recognized only the next year when the school achieved state accreditation. The cooperative effort of Rosenwald administrators, local black citizens, and county school officials helped to create a center for African American education in the Madison area that strengthened in coming decades.[48]

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48 "Hickerson Re-Elected County Superintendent," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, April 22, 1921, 1; W. F. Credle to S. L. Smith, January 17, 1924; S. L. Smith to W. F. Credle, January 21, 1924; S. L. Smith to W. F. Credle, March 12, 1924; S. L. Smith to A. T. Allen, March 19, 1924, all in Box 1, Folder S. L. Smith, Field Agent, June 1923-June 1924; Madison Colored/Charles Drew Alumni Association, Inc., Madison Colored School, "Our History," http://www.mccdalumni.org/about-us.html; Betsy Franklin Collection, Box 3, File 118, Rockingham Community College Historical Collections; Rodenbough, *Town of Madison: A Heritage to Honor*, 19; Madison Colored School, Rockingham County, North Carolina, Fisk University Rosenwald Database, http://rosenwald.fisk.edu/?; *Community School Plans*,

One benefit of the Rosenwald program to all school construction in the 1920s was its set of uniform architectural plans, available to all who requested them. The plans, also used by whites, typically ranged from one-teacher to seven-teacher schools but could extend to designs for ten-teacher facilities, such as the one built in Leaksville in 1928, the largest of the Rosenwald schools built in Rockingham County. School Superintendent J. H. Allen wrote in June 1926 to W. F. Credle, a Rosenwald supervisor, requesting "blueprints and specifications" for such a structure, as local officials had already authorized "a ten room school building for the colored people in the Leaksville Township." Credle replied that he was happy to send the plans and could likely offer the standard amount contributed for a school of this size but would first like to "go up and see the lay of the land," as he understood that the site for the school had not yet been selected. Two years later, what was known at first as the Leaksville County Training School was completed, a building that "pleased" the state Rosenwald supervisor. The designation of being a "county training school" (CTS) was usually applied to large public schools offering high school vocational courses to black students in the South, but typically only those that had received funds from the John F. Slater Fund, another philanthropic endeavor seeking to assist African Americans in the 1920s and 1930s. There is no evidence that the Leaksville school received monies from the Slater Fund, but it was listed as a CTS in the Rosenwald records. Locally, the large school, which had

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Bulletin No. 3 (1924), 17. Mike Vogel, "Renovation Won't Gloss over Memories," *Greensboro* (NC) *News and Record*, December 5, 1985, L15; Colley, "A Plan for Consolidation," Table VII, 18. The application for Madison Colored School (77C) was approved on January 21, 1924, and the Rosenwald money disbursed in March 1924. Students came to Madison Colored School from the Rockingham County communities of Stoneville, Hayes Chapel, Shiloh, Madison, and Mayodan, as well as Prestonville, Sandy Ridge, Pine Hall, and Walnut Cove in eastern Stokes County.

been built at a cost of $58,000, with all but the $2,100 from the Rosenwald program coming from public funds, was named for abolitionist Frederick Douglass. Although at times white school officials misspelled the name as "Douglas" or referred to the new facility as "the Negro school on King's Mill Road," or just the "Negro school," Douglass School in Leaksville became the third key educational center for African Americans in Rockingham County. Led by its first principal Lawrence E. Boyd from 1928 to 1940, the school was accredited in 1929 and joined the black institutions in Reidsville and Madison as regionally known for strong instructional programs.[49]

Critics have claimed that the Rosenwald effort was at its core a very public acceptance of Jim Crow discrimination against blacks and that the money contributed was quite minimal in most locations, with a typical school building receiving only a small percentage of its construction costs from their fund. However, at a time when white supremacy was deeply entrenched and with the Ku Klux Klan making bold public shows of their large membership levels, the Rosenwald Fund, through a public-private partnership, allowed local people to plan, help finance, and see construction through its various phases in order to obtain a suitable school building for their children. Even though the bulk of the construction funds came from public taxpayer funds—more than three and a half million dollars—the portion donated by the Rosenwald Fund was a

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49 J. H. Allen to W. F. Credle, June 23, 1926 and W. H. Credle to J. H. Allen, June 25, 1926, in Box 2, Folder A, July 1925-June 1926; J. H. Allen to W. F. Credle, June 5, 1928, Box 4, Folder A, July 1927-June 1928, Correspondence of Supervisor of the Rosenwald Fund, Division of Negro Education, North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction North Carolina State Archives; Edward E. Redcay, *County Training Schools and Public Secondary Education for Negroes in the South* (Washington, D.C.: John F. Slater Fund, 1935), 12-13; Leaksville County Training School, Rockingham County, North Carolina, Fisk University Rosenwald Database, http://rosenwald.fisk.edu/?; Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, May 16, 1929; June 1, 1929; and December 17, 1929.

stimulus to get things going in the community, and in fact, amounted to an economic infusion of more than $700,000 into black communities in North Carolina alone. Starting with Rosenwald assistance, African Americans had motivation and support that encouraged them to give sacrificially and to donate of their own resources and labor toward each school building. Outside oversight of each project gave some additional authority in matters of fundraising and construction. Credle and Davis, as Rosenwald supervisors, kept tabs on the process, thereby assuring its completion. However, little would have been done without the cooperation of the white school superintendent and other school officials in each county. Some, like Superintendents Hickerson and J. H. Allen in Rockingham County, actively sought assistance from the Rosenwald Fund, worked closely with them to assure the receipt of monies, and cooperated in inspecting each facility to make sure all buildings met the program's requirements. Sometimes, however, Rosenwald representatives were dismayed by the lack of cooperation from white school officials. State leadership of black schools as well as the Rosenwald agents were sometimes mightily disappointed by leadership in counties where the need was great, but white officials were not supportive of building new schools. In one county, real estate agents worked to "coerce" the school board there to buy "undesirable land" to be used for Rosenwald school buildings. Rosenwald supervisor Credle once mused that "official school minds are puzzles which I have not yet been able to solve." Rockingham County leaders, in contrast, encouraged and welcomed the assistance from the Rosenwald

Fund rather than trying to thwart its efforts. Perhaps this partnership created some of the sense of "racial harmony" that many whites spoke of in later decades.[50]

The Rosenwald officials certainly did promote this view, that what they were involved in was an effort to bring about better race relations in the American South. The commitment to these Rosenwald schools often resulted in a greater sense of community, as none were built without funds from the black citizens the school would serve. The Rosenwald Fund began their work in North Carolina in 1915 and benefited areas all across the state. By the time of Julius Rosenwald's death in 1932, all but seven counties had at least one Rosenwald building. By the end of the program in North Carolina, black communities had contributed nearly as much as the Rosenwald Fund had to these building projects—$665,236, while "white friends" had donated more than $75,000. Of the seventy-eight rural and special charter schools for black students accredited by 1931, fifty-four were meeting in Rosenwald buildings, and of the 14,657 African American students enrolled in the public high schools of North Carolina in 1931, 55 percent (8,025) were housed in Rosenwald schools.[51]

In addition to a campaign of schoolhouse building in the state, Rosenwald Funds also aided 135 libraries in 59 North Carolina counties, paid for instruction to extend

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50 See Hoffschwelle, *The Rosenwald Schools*, xii, xiii, and James Leloudis, *Schooling the New South: Pedagogy, Self, and Society in North Carolina, 1880-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 217-27; Sanders, *Negro Child Welfare in North Carolina*, 308; G. E. Davis to W. H. Credle, October 11, 1927; Credle Report, March 1929; Report of W. F. Credle, Supervisor of Rosenwald Fund, May 1924, North Carolina Digital Collections, Department of Cultural Resources.

51 The Julius Rosenwald Fund, Roster of Rural Schools, 1921-1925, North Carolina Digital Collections, Sadler Application # 93-A, Approved 3-11-1922, http://digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm/compoundobject/collection/ p16062coll13/id 4489/rec/82; Rosenwald Fund Reports W. F. Credle, 1921-1929, http://digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p16062coll13/id/4756/rec/93; Sanders, *Negro Child Welfare in North Carolina,* 308, 311; Hanchett, "The Rosenwald Schools," 416, 423.

school terms in 55 schools, and helped buy 43 new buses that transported pupils to 30 schools. In Rockingham County, the Leaksville Township Board purchased a Chevrolet vehicle in 1929 "to transport Colored Pupils from Moyer Town Section to the High School" on the condition that they received "half of the cost from the Rosenthal [sic] Fund which is [s]et aside for this purpose." A few months later, school officials committed $150 for "Domestic Science" equipment for Douglass School, "provided an equal amount can be gotten from the Rosenthal [sic] Fund." In similar fashion, the Leaksville Board sought assistance from the Slater Fund. They requested that half the expense of $414 be paid by this fund for general science equipment for Douglass School.[52]

For African American students in the Leaksville Township district during the period of white consolidation (1921-1934), Douglass High School had been built with assistance from the Rosenwald Fund, as well as new buildings at Blue Creek and Moir Town and additions to the small Springfield and Sunny Home schools. During this time, however, Principal Boyd was not paid on the same scale as white principals. In 1930, Boyd (who is marked as most black citizens named in school records with "Col" for "Colored") was paid a yearly salary of only $1,350, exactly half of what the principal of the white high school received and more than a thousand dollars less than the two white

52 Sanders, *Negro Child Welfare in North Carolina*, 311; Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, September 27, 1929; October 30, 1929; February 7, 1930; and April 15, 1930. The board also proposed to use this "truck" to move "the Whites from the Voss Farm section on Stoneville Road."

graded school principals. After reminding the board of his promised raise, Boyd's salary was increased to $1,440 for the 1930-1931 school term.[53]

While more than two dozen classrooms were added at white schools in the district in the early 1930s, only a few improvements were made by the school board at the black schools: one room at Moir Town and two at Douglass were wired for electric lights. In the midst of the Depression, the Leaksville school district also took advantage of available funds through New Deal agencies. In 1933, the board instructed Superintendent Holmes to "get prices for erecting a school building at Draper for Negroes," perhaps as a possibly federally funded project. In cooperation with the Civil Works Administration (CWA) and the Public Works Administration (PWA), an extensive list of projects was ordered in the fall of 1933. The list did include a three-room "Negro school near Draper," as well as ten additional classrooms at white schools and other improvements at facilities for both races. The new school for African Americans, apparently a replacement of the Sunshine School, was improved with the addition of two outdoor toilets in the fall of 1935, suggesting its facilities, though newly built, were still below the standards of the white schools. To keep schools for African Americans going during the Depression years, Principal Boyd recalled that he often paid for the operational needs in the Leaksville District from his own pocket, but most of the time he was eventually reimbursed by the local board. To improve Douglass School, Boyd went ahead with grading the grounds and building a wall around the facility, "calling upon the people of

53 "Leaksville Township Schools Great Asset to Community," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, August 30, 1934, A6; Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, April 15, 1930; June 17, 1930; and May 23, 1931. Boyd received another modest increase in his salary in 1931 to $1500 yearly.

the community for donations for this project," and then advancing his own money to pay construction workers. The board did agree to reimburse Boyd, noting that the work would have been necessary at some point.[54]

Having been granted a year's leave of absence without pay, Douglass principal, "Professor" Boyd earned his doctorate in 1938, only "the second member of his race" to receive a Ph.D. degree from the University of Iowa. A local newspaper editorial congratulated Boyd on his "noteworthy attainment" and called him a "credit to his race" and "a credit to the educational system of Leaksville." There could be no doubt as to his abilities, the editor wrote, and concluded, "It is in the hands of such a learned educator that rests the education of our young negro citizens." A native of St. Louis, Missouri, Boyd taught physics and chemistry before taking on supervisory duties in Leaksville, both at Livingstone College in Salisbury and at the black high school there. Reflecting on his years of working in the Tri-Cities, black principal Boyd called the area a "typical textile town conglomerate." The power structure was such, he recalled, that mill managers "exercised a pervasive influence" on boards and committees, directing "company-centered" recreational and other community programs, as well as the schools. The power of employers and managers was so great that, according to Boyd, both blacks and whites acted on the basis of what was good for the textile mills. Within this framework, he asserted, the "lines of segregation were recognized and accepted as the Law, but not as a vehicle . . . of injustice and inhumane treatment." On the quality of

54 Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, February 25, 1931; March 16, 1931; May 25, 1932; January 17, 1933; November 28, 1933; and October 1, 1935.

teachers in Leaksville's black schools, Boyd maintained that those teaching in town met higher standards than those in the small schools more distant from the commercial areas. Those in the town district were required to be college graduates and to earn "A" certificates. Teachers "outside of Leaksville proper" often opposed consolidation for fear of losing their jobs because of this expectation. In the 1920s, Boyd recalled, many of the teachers were from outside the school district and lived with "host families." Sometimes as "outsiders" they clashed with local expectations, but overall, these teachers made "beneficent" contributions to the life of the community. Under their instruction, students at Douglass excelled in music, drama, and especially in debating, advancing in 1933 in the statewide competition against defending champions High Point Penn. Instructors also had "remarkable success" in teaching German during these years because of the high "calibre of students" at Douglass. Ministers, however, Boyd observed, tried to "wield undue influence upon the schools and teachers" by "dictating" who was recruited according to church membership and "forcing teachers into Sunday School teaching roles."[55]

During the Depression years, the response of the all-white school board to requests by black citizens was mixed. After the building projects under the auspices of

55 Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, August 17, 1937; "Principal of Leaksville Negro Schools Is Awarded Doctor Philosophy Degree," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, August 4, 1938, 1; also see Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, May 21, 1929 and July 17, 1929; "A Man of Letters," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, August 4, 1938, 4; Lawrence E. Boyd, "Reminiscences," Butler Collection, Rockingham Community College Historical Collections, 1, 4-5; "Douglass Hi Debating Team Meets High Point Here Friday Night," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, [1933]. The title of "Professor" was often used by whites writing about black principals in this era, both in newspapers and in official school records. However, this courtesy title was also used for white principals in a few cases. Boyd went on to become a college professor in Georgia.

the Rosenwald Fund in the 1920s, the leaders of the Leaksville district did attempt some improvements in their black schools. They approached county commissioners about putting in a water supply at "Moyer Town" school and were able to put in a pump there in late 1929. This same year, the Leaksville Board also budgeted $100 for library books "to go to the Negro School under Professor Boyd." When Boyd went to the board in December 1929 and asked them to lend him the money to pay teachers "in the colored schools up to Christmas," he was denied. In the same meeting, black residents of the Sunny Home area of Draper asked to use the school there for worship services since their church had been recently burned. It is unclear from the minutes whether the board agreed to this use, but as the request was presented on their behalf by esteemed board member Dr. G. P. Dillard, the answer was likely "yes." An additional teacher was hired for the Sunshine School south of Draper on the condition that the owners of the building (apparently not the school system) erect a partition to accommodate two classes. A rash of fires at the Moir Town School in the winter of 1930-1931 prompted the Leaksville School Board to offer a $50 reward for the arrest and conviction of whoever was responsible for setting the fires. The board, however, rejected requests from Moir Town citizens to cultivate gardens on school property there and to cross the school lot to get to an adjoining cemetery. The board expressed concern because of crowded conditions at Douglass, the township's flagship school for African Americans, and in 1937 planned a $20,000 addition.[56]

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56 Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, May 16, 1929; June 1, 1929; August 26, 1929; September 27, 1929; December 17, 1929; May 13, 1930; October 27, 1930, January 1, 1931; and November 13, 1936. The name of the school was alternately spelled "Moyer" or "Moir" Town.

Education for blacks in the Leaksville Township, however, took a definite downward turn in October 1938 when the Douglass School was reduced to "skeleton walls and charred ruins" by a devastating early morning fire. Its location on King Mill Road, "a short distance from the city," may have been a factor in the destruction since the nearest city fire hydrant was a quarter of a mile away and the local fire department did not have a hose long enough to reach the school. Neighbors who witnessed the conflagration stated that no siren sounded and that the fire was left to burn itself out. Some in the African American community sensed that, even in the choice of location and the construction phase, the distance placed between the Douglass School and the white commercial and residential sections of Leaksville and Spray was intentional, to remove the black school from the white communities. Leaksville Superintendent James E. Holmes assured school patrons that $40,000 in insurance money would be claimed, plans would be drawn up, and construction of a new Douglass School "considerably larger than the one destroyed" would begin as soon as feasible. Still, most of the African American students in the Tri-Cities area ended the decade in temporary quarters. The "old lodge" hall on the Stoneville road and various "colored" churches were used as makeshift schools until a new facility opened.[57]

Overall, education for North Carolina's African Americans, who made up about 29 percent of the state's population at the time, showed a great deal of progress in the 1920s and 1930s. Around 1930, three-fourths of the black population in North Carolina

57 "Community Suffers Big Loss in Negro School Fire," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, October 20, 1938, 1; Gloria Purcell, interview by author, February 24, 2017.

lived in rural agricultural regions. Although the number of schools for black students fell from 2,470 in 1919 to 2,417 in 1929, this decrease might be attributed to the construction of many new, larger buildings throughout the rural areas and small towns of the state, many with the assistance of the Rosenwald Fund, offering African Americans improved facilities. In these same ten years, average daily attendance increased by more than seventy-three thousand. The average yearly salary for black teachers also rose from $197.08 in 1919 to $510.07 a decade later. In addition to the Rosenwald building campaigns, several other broad programs across North Carolina assisted the cause of African American education in the 1920s and 1930s. Commitment to bettering black education was aided in 1923 when a statewide PTA Association was formed for African American faculty, families, and students. Keenly aware of the "many handicaps," which prevented black students from getting to classes, "such as poverty, work, weather, and sickness," one of their main goals was improving attendance. From 1908, when the Jeanes teachers began their work in the state, to 1931, the fund contributed $194,058 to hire supervisors, who worked with all the African American teachers in a county. The Jeanes programs in forty-one North Carolina counties, where teachers traveled to students' homes, trained teachers, and organized school activities, were likely responsible for enrolling several thousand more black students in those locations than would have been attending public schools without them.[58]

58 Sanders, *Negro Child Welfare in North Carolina*, 3, 4, 12, 307, 309, 313. A study of African American schools by the Slater Foundation found that in 1928-1929, the total enrollment in the forty-one North Carolina counties having Jeanes teachers was 132,288, while the remaining fifty-eight enrolled 56,903.

Still, reminders of racial segregation were all around as North Carolina residents persevered through the Depression. Some racial inequities were clearly present in day-to-day life and in the functioning of the Rockingham County Schools. As classes got underway in 1938, for instance, a "general meeting and banquet of all members of the faculty of the white schools" was announced in the newspaper. No meetings for black teachers were mentioned. Specific days at the area agricultural fair were designated by race, as Tuesday and Thursday were specified as days of free admission for white children, one for Tri-City School Children's Day and the other Rural School Children's Day, while Wednesday was set aside for "Colored School Children's Day." In the midst of a segregated world, however, black citizens organized and exhibited numerous strategies for making at least some incremental progress for their communities. They aspired to improve the facilities and institutions in their own neighborhoods, taking advantage of federal monies that might be available through New Deal agencies. The same week as the separate teachers' meetings and the segregated fair days, the Civic League, "prominent colored citizens of the Tri-City," met to facilitate a project to establish a community center for African Americans. They had already sought out a suitable site for the building and discussed how to secure the location. Though they were the "prime movers" in the project, the group met at the Methodist Colored Church with a "white delegation," which included the district school superintendent, who pledged to use their leverage to get the project through the WPA and secure the cooperation of the white community. The African Americans, led by George Allen, Bruce Roberts, and the

Reverend H. C. Gannaway, also brought up the need to obtain "greater facilities for colored patients at the local hospital."[59]

Over the first forty years of the twentieth century, access to education in Rockingham County was increasingly marked by geographical divisions and segregated by race. In the final decades of the nineteenth century, district committees had had to work especially hard to build school houses, allotting money to schools of both races on a generally equitable basis. About 1900, Rockingham County had dozens of very basic, small rural schools—for both black and white students—but with positive votes for "special district taxes," white schools were consolidated and improved. While the racial makeup of Rockingham County changed considerably in the early decades of the twentieth century, as the black population fell from 40 percent in 1890 to only 21 percent in 1940, throughout the area citizens of both races were remarkably supportive of schools, voting consistently for school bonds and special taxes to support their community's children and making personal contributions to the schools in their neighborhoods. Increasingly, after the racial disfranchisement and white supremacy campaigns at the turn of the century, however, segregation and other Jim Crow practices took stronger holds on the area and affected educational opportunity. Also, in the first two decades of the twentieth century, a marked divide between rural and town schools emerged. Mergers and improvements took place in the early 1920s in the towns of the county. Some black schools were consolidated through Rosenwald campaigns, and in

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59 "Meeting of Teachers at H. S. Saturday," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, September 1, 1938, 1; "Outstanding Midway Acts Booked for County Fair Opening Here Sept 12," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, September 8, 1938, 1; "Colored Citizens Meet To Discuss Community Center for Their People in City," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, September 8, 1938, 1.

response to efforts to improve country schools, by 1923, "five large union schools" that provided high school work had been built for rural white students. In the midst of the Depression, additions were made to three of these schools and five new elementary schools for whites were constructed. Three town systems plus the rural county unit, the largest of the four in the county with more than five thousand white elementary students, had formed by the 1930s. By the start of the 1935 term, "every white child of school age in rural Rockingham County was housed in a modern school plant," and the county system was prepared to meet the recently mandated eight-month term.[60]

By mid-century, Rockingham County towns offered generally adequate facilities for both white and African American students. In 1937, the Leaksville Township operated six school plants for African Americans. Douglass, which included buildings for both lower and upper grades, employed seven teachers at the high school, while eight held positions at Douglass Elementary. There were three two-teacher schools—Blue Creek, Sunshine, and Moir Town—while Springfield and Sunny Home had only one teacher each. After a destructive fire in 1938, a new facility was built on the Douglass site and continued to provide opportunities for black students in the Tri-Cities. For whites, the area's schools were available in nearly every community, carefully repaired and improved by a vigilant school board and supported by active parent-teacher organizations and civic groups. In the City of Reidsville of the mid-1930s, both white and black students had access to accredited schools. A total of five schools served the

60 "Rockingham Co. Can Boast of Excellent Schools," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, Development Edition, August 1934, E5.

community—two elementary schools and one high school for whites, and an elementary and high school for African Americans. Less than 1 percent of eligible students in the Reidsville district were not attending school in 1934, according to Superintendent L. J. Perry, and the system welcomed those rural students who were bussed into the city. Reidsville's black population was increasingly strengthened in influence by its access to better paying jobs, as it was one of three cities in the state, along with Winston-Salem and Durham, where African Americans worked in significant numbers in manufacturing plants. Each school, both white and black, had an active Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and physical education instruction was available for "all able-bodied students." School leaders were especially proud of the "outstanding athletic teams" in the Reidsville district. The additional building efforts and school improvement of the 1930s had made Reidsville, its leaders touted, "one of the most enviable consolidated public school systems in the state." Whites in the Madison area had recently built brick elementary and high school facilities as well as a rural elementary school in the Intelligence community. Thanks in part to the Rosenwald campaign, black students had one high school and an elementary school available to them in the town of Madison and three one-teacher schools in the surrounding countryside. School officials in 1934 declared that "practically 100% of all the children of school age" in Rockingham County were enrolled in the four systems—making a total of 15,683 pupils, both white and black. In 1938, to ensure that all students between the ages of seven and fourteen attended school regularly, the supervisor of county welfare, Mrs. John Wilson, announced that school officials intended to carry out the "strict enforcement" of the compulsory attendance law and even

"prosecute the parents" if necessary. "There is no reason for nonattendance this year," Wilson said. "Crops are good, mills are running and WPA wages are higher." On the eve of the United States entrance into World War II, both black and white students in rural schools and in the towns of Reidsville, Madison, and Leaksville had steady opportunities and most likely could have responded positively to this compulsory attendance requirement. However, at least sixteen hundred of the county's elementary black pupils were still relegated to dozens of isolated one- and two-teacher rural schools, where attendance was much harder to maintain and their educational environment was seriously restricted.[61]

61 Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, June 18, 1937; "Community Suffers Big Loss in Negro School Fire," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, October 20, 1938, 1; Sanders, *Negro Child Welfare in North Carolina*, 4; "Total of 2,999 Were Enrolled in Reidsville Schools Last Year," Leaksville (NC) News, August 30, 1934, E3; "Attendance at School is Compulsory," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, September 1, 1938, 1; "Rockingham County, North Carolina, Population by Race," *Social Explorer*, https://www.socialexplorer.com /a9676d974c/explore; Colley, "A Plan for Consolidation," 1, 3; see "History of Education in North Carolina," State Department of Public Instruction, 1993, 15; "Rockingham Co. Can Boast of Excellent Schools," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, Development Edition, August 1934, E5. This article reports that 1400 are enrolled in the county system's "negro elementary schools," all but one of the twenty-four which were either one- or two-teacher schools. There was one three-teacher school for black children. The North Carolina General Assembly mandated the eight-month term in 1933.

CHAPTER IV

MAINTAINING SEGREGATED SCHOOLS FROM WORLD WAR II TO *BROWN*

As he inspected the rural black schools in his system in 1944, Rockingham County School Superintendent J. C. Colley was alarmed by their condition. The small frame buildings, seventeen of which had room for only one teacher and her class, had been "built cheaply," often from salvaged materials, and were "inadequate and obsolete." They were located on small plots of land, often "on banks or . . . rough terrain," and frequently in "comparatively inaccessible 'corners' of the various communities," leading Colley to conclude: "A number of the buildings should have been condemned and abandoned long ago." Inside, black students were using "out-moded" furniture, "double-desks which were discarded nine years ago by white schools," and some hand-made benches and tables. The rural African American pupils had no "maps, charts, globes, libraries, or supplementary readers," Colley wrote, as nearly all the white students in the county did. The average value for all the furniture and other contents in the more than two dozen black schools Colley examined was only $110.[1]

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1 Joshua Corbett Colley, "A Plan for Consolidation of Negro Schools in Rockingham County, North Carolina" (master's thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1944), 91, 93, 22, 27, 24, 23, 93; Also see L. E. Boyd, "Reminiscences," Butler Collection, Rockingham County Historical Collections, Gerald B. James Library, Rockingham Community College, Wentworth, North Carolina. The photographs Colley took of these schools, he wrote, "flatter the buildings." The "town" schools for African Americans—Madison Colored, Douglass, and Washington—generally had more of these teaching tools and more up-to-date equipment, although, as Principal Boyd noted, black educators such as himself sometimes bought items to supply their courses from their own salaries and hoped that the school system would later reimburse them.

Only four of these county buildings had electric lights—"simple drop bulbs." There were outdoor toilets, "maintained reasonably well," at all the schools, but no indoor facilities. Drinking water was also an issue. At twenty-seven of the schools, students carried water as much as a mile from neighbors' wells or springs, or "from springs in nearby valleys or gullies." Two had wells that their African American school patrons had dug themselves. Despite receiving reports of the inadequate and unsafe water supplies, nothing was done at this time by county leadership to alleviate these conditions at the rural black schools. Although in the fall of 1946 the Rockingham County Health Department further identified the water problem and requested "portable drinking fountains in the colored schools," the board responded that this large expenditure was unnecessary because plans were already underway to consolidate these schools into "modern plants." This consolidation did not occur, however, for four more years while rural black students remained at these schools with inadequate water access.[2]

"In such buildings, with their crowded condition," Colley wrote, "even the best teachers could offer only fair service in this modern age of public-education-for-all in North Carolina." Betsy Franklin could have confirmed the daunting task instructors such as herself faced as the sole teacher at one of these schools for African Americans. "Miss Franklin," as she was known in her western Rockingham County community, recorded in her school monthly report in May 1945 that she taught eighteen boys and twenty-three girls in grades one through seven at the Latticue School near Bethany. Of the forty-one,

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2 Colley, "A Plan for Consolidation," 23. The two schools with wells were Piney Fork and Ruffin Colored. See Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, October 7, 1946.

twelve were first graders, eight were in the third grade, and there were seven each in fifth and sixth grades. Only four second graders, one fourth grader, and two seventh graders were enrolled. Some Rockingham County teachers, also tasked with instructing all seven grade levels, faced even heavier pupil loads. At Whitsett, the average enrollment over the 1930s and through World War II was fifty-two for one teacher, while reaching sixty-nine in one year. There were a similar number enrolled at Garrett Grove. The Gwynn School's lone teacher instructed forty-eight students in 1938 and forty-four in 1942. The Wall and Jones schools were especially overcrowded, with seventy-one and sixty-six students, respectively, under the instruction of a single teacher. How demanding it must have been for teachers (and students) in these schools.[3]

Maintaining any school system under the conditions of the mid-twentieth century South was challenging, but perpetuating Jim Crow separation of the races took an incredible amount of extra effort and often dictated decisions on the part of local leaders that resulted in inefficiency and inequitable conditions, such as those Superintendent Colley observed. As a result, a segregated system such as that of Rockingham County was often unwieldy and frequently unfair. These difficulties were especially apparent during the 1940s as the county also responded to the challenges of depression and war, operated four separate geographically distinct school systems, and maintained old school buildings spread across a large rural county with limited funds and personnel. At mid-century, there were continued requests for school improvements at the white schools and

3 Colley, "A Plan for Consolidation," 1; Table II, 9; Table I, 8; Table III, 10; and Table V, 12; Teacher's Roll Book, Betsy Ann Franklin Collection, Box 3, File 116, Rockingham County Historical Collections, Gerald B. James Library, Rockingham Community College, Wentworth, North Carolina; Colley collected and examined enrollment figures for even years, 1930-1944.

insistence from local committees to keep their own schools and programs despite duplication and inefficiencies. African Americans made repeated calls for consolidation of the nearly two dozen one and two-teacher black schools, and both races increasingly sought student transportation to school despite confusing attendance lines and bus routes. In what was already at times a maddening mix of demands and needs, school leaders had to maintain the expected Jim Crow separation of the races. In nearly every situation before and after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, they carefully marked personnel by race and meticulously named schools as "white" or "colored" to make sure there was no mixing of the races. Lists of teachers "elected" each spring were organized according to race, with white schools and teachers listed first and then the "colored" schools and educators put at the end. Names appeared in this order in local newspapers, if black teachers were included at all. Requests for building or repair funds were marked as designated for white or colored schools. Black citizens who appeared before the four school boards in the county were consistently noted by race. Meetings of black and white teachers were always held separately. Even a county-wide health conference when teachers met with Health Department personnel was held at two different locations—Wentworth School for whites and Douglass High School for "colored teachers." What resulted was a system overwhelmed at times by too many demands and too few resources to meet them, ultimately marked by unmistakable racial inequities.[4]

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4 Examples abound from the school board minutes when "white" and "colored" were used as race markers in the day-to-day business of the schools. See, for example, Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, February 3, 1941; August 5, 1946; Minutes of Madison City Schools, May 3, 1941; November 3, 1952; Minutes of Reidsville City Schools, September 7, 1942; March 3, 1954; Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, April 30, 1948; April 15, 1953; "Supt. John M. Hough Names Teachers and Principals for 1947-48," *The Advisor*, September 1947, 10; "Health Study Sessions Set,"

An overview of the North Carolina educational system in 1950 is useful for understanding how segregated schools functioned across the state at mid-century. Each of the one hundred counties administered at least one system of segregated schools, with the forty-eight most rural counties operating a single district divided by race. Nearly a third of North Carolina counties functioned with two school units—one for the students of a small town or larger city and the rest assigned to a rural county district. Sixteen counties were dealing with the challenges of operating three different geographical school units in 1950—a county system and two "city" districts—a circumstance which meant multiple boards of education, superintendents, and budgets. Only two—Rockingham and Robeson—had *four* separate county and city systems to manage, a most challenging task of negotiating crisscrossing bus routes, four distinct education budgets, four school attendance zones, and four sets of school boards and administrators. In addition to maintaining schools based on geographical divisions, each county was also charged with separating its students by race, effectively creating twice as many school "systems" within each county. In this regard, Robeson County faced triracial divisions and the most complicated school structure in the state, with white and black separation, as well as seventeen Indian schools in its county district. Rockingham County had the second most demands on its organizational framework, operating a large rural system, one small Indian school with an enrollment of forty-one students in its white county system, plus three city units in Leaksville, Reidsville, and Madison.[5]

Greensboro (NC) *Daily News*, July 20, 1946, 4; "Summer Health Session Slated for Rockingham," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, August 21, 1946, 3.

5 State Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Educational Directory of North Carolina, 1949-1950,* Raleigh, North Carolina, 35-107, North Carolina Digital Collections, Department of Cultural

In North Carolina, as in much of the rest of the Upper South, demographics and geography determined school access. The populations of some mountain counties (and one at the North Carolina coast) were so overwhelmingly white that no black schools existed there. The distance and remoteness of many communities in these areas also meant that, in 1950, whites had access only to one and two-teacher schools. Fourteen of Watauga's twenty-six white schools were staffed by only one or two teachers, while nearly half of Wilkes County's forty-two white schools were similarly one or two-teacher buildings. By mid-century, however, most areas in North Carolina had achieved consolidation of their white schools and could provide more specific instruction by grade or subject matter in larger and more substantial, often brick, school buildings. By 1950, schools for elementary white students were generally "graded," and deemed of "standard" status with at least eight teachers available, one for each grade one through eight. All one hundred counties provided at least one accredited public high school for white students, with cities and small towns supporting several elementary school options for white students, and many white high schools boasting twenty or more faculty members.[6]

Resources, http://digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm/ref/collection/p249901coll22/id/208088; State Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1949-1950,* 17, North Carolina Digital Collections, Department of Cultural Resources, http://digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm/ref/collection/p249901coll22/id/434148. The details in this section derive from the author's analysis of material in these editions of the *Educational Directory* and the *Biennial Report*. Thirty-four counties maintained a county system and one town district. Buncombe County, for instance, ran two systems—one for the city of Asheville and another for the rest of the county. See *Educational Directory*, 41-42. Information on Robeson and Rockingham counties can be found in *Educational Directory*, 89-92. Indian enrollment in Rockingham County comes from the *Biennial Report,* 1949-1950. In contrast to Rockingham County's forty-one Indian pupils, Robeson County had 6,377 Indian students enrolled in 1950.

6 State Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Educational Directory of North Carolina, 1949-1950*, 35-107. In 1950, Clay, Mitchell, and Graham counties had no public schools for African Americans, while

Though being limited to small, substandard facilities was the exception for white students in North Carolina, the opposite was true for African American pupils in 1950. Twenty-one counties, mainly in the mountains, had no accredited high school for African Americans at all. Small one and two-teacher schools for North Carolina's black pupils were not only the norm where few African Americans lived but were especially prevalent in poor rural areas of the Piedmont and eastern parts of the state, where the black population was larger. These small, inadequate spaces had already been largely eliminated in the most populous counties of the state—Guilford and Mecklenburg—but were still in use for black students in many other areas, including Rockingham County. Sixteen of the twenty-one black schools offered to rural Rockingham County students were only one or two-teacher facilities. Although there were larger, long-established schools for African Americans in three towns of the county, six such small black schools still operated within the three city systems of Madison, Leaksville, and Reidsville in 1950.[7]

The sheer number of schools and school districts spread across Rockingham County made an educational system segregated by race very difficult to operate.

Watauga, Yancey, Madison, and Avery in the mountains and Dare at the coast offered only a single one- or two-teacher school for black students. In Ashe, Watauga, and Wilkes counties, there were significant numbers of one- or two-teacher schools for whites. The mountain counties of Avery, Buncombe, Cherokee, Cleveland, Haywood, Jackson, Macon, Rutherford, and Transylvania, as well as four counties located in Piedmont North Carolina (Person, Rowan, Randolph, and Robeson) had multiple one- or two-teacher schools for whites scattered across their terrain. A similar circumstance was true for the coastal counties of Carteret and Dare. Most of these larger white high schools were located in the state's more populated cities of Lenoir, Concord, Asheville, Durham, Charlotte, Rocky Mount, and Wilmington.

7 State Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Educational Directory of North Carolina*, 1940-1950, 89-92. These small schools included Race Track School in Reidsville, Galloway Grove, Good Will, and Hayes Chapel in the Madison area, and Blue Creek and Sunshine schools in the Leaksville district.

Officials and community leaders were trying to run a total of 57 different schools in 1950. In the 1940s and 1950s, each of the four separate geographical white school units had its own superintendent and school board, which hired teachers and principals and oversaw a budget. Funds authorized by the county board of commissioners were divided among these four systems according to size of student population. The apportionment of the 1946 budget of $355,000 informs our understanding of the relative size and functions of each school unit. Because of the number of buildings and faculty and its oversight of bus routes as well as the town systems, the county district received $158,000 or 45 percent of available funds. The larger city units of Leaksville and Reidsville were allotted $63,000 and $58,000, respectively, while the smallest system in the county, Madison, received $21,000.[8]

Added to this complexity was what amounted to four additional systems of black schools with their own vaguely established attendance lines. Overall, in 1950, the county's school-age children were 75 percent white and 25 percent African American. Enrollment by race across the four districts varied from 15 percent black in the Leaksville Township Schools to 37 percent black in the Reidsville system. The rural county system was 21 percent black, while the Madison administrative unit looked more like Reidsville with 35 percent of their students being African American. The fact that all black high school students attended either Douglass in Leaksville, the Madison Colored High School, or Washington in Reidsville because no high schools were available to black

8 State Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Educational Directory of North Carolina*, 1940-1950, 91-92; Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, July 1, 1946.

students "out in the county" meant that all these numbers would have been adjusted if they reflected the districts in which students lived. About a third of school-aged students, both black and white, attended no school at all. A truly challenging task faced this largely rural community. The mission was to maintain Jim Crow separation while operating school systems that effectively taught the nearly fourteen thousand students enrolled. These educational goals were very difficult to meet, especially in the 1940s as resources were redirected to the war effort and many schools were increasingly in need of equipment and repairs. Even more seriously at risk were the more than two thousand of Rockingham County's students of color who attended classes in thirty-two inadequately constructed and ill-equipped facilities, many of their schools being little more than old frame structures built for and staffed by one or two teachers.[9]

In regard to educational leadership, white school officials had the power to facilitate or obstruct all concerns that came before them, including school building and repairs, hiring of personnel, routing of buses, and funding for all projects. The elected members of the four all-white school boards in the county—three in the small towns and another for the county at large—were typically successful farmers or business leaders, often local physicians and other professionals, and overwhelmingly male. In Reidsville, where there had been a hospital since 1930, medical doctors often served on their board of education. One, Dr. Hunter Moricle, served the community in this role from 1949 through the desegregation of the schools in 1970. In Leaksville, many school trustees

9 Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Biennial Report, 1940-1950*, 12-13, 17. Colley, "A Plan for Consolidation," 22-24, 91-93. Figures are based on analysis by the author of the information from Rockingham County contained in the *Biennial Report.*

during these years were industrial supervisors, as what was known as the Tri-Cities area—Leaksville, Spray and Draper—had numerous manufacturing interests and scores of high-level managers who lived in one of the three mill towns. The Rockingham County Board had oversight over the other boards, especially over the smaller Madison District, and worked with them in securing funds, sharing some personnel, and resolving disputes. For example, in 1942, a delegation from Madison that included the mayor and the newspaper publisher asked that two members of their board be replaced and gave their choices for the positions. In 1945, two other men were nominated by Madison area citizens, who noted that the men "had children in the school" and would therefore make good board members. The final decision was left up to the county board.[10]

In addition to the white school boards elected for the county and for the three town school units, there were additional roles for whites in rural communities. Over three decades, a structure of white local school committees for the county system built a broad network of local leadership but also sometimes complicated the functioning of schools in a large segregated school district. In 1950, for instance, in addition to the twenty elected school board members in the four separate units, twenty-three additional district committeemen weighed in on school administration. Local school committees were customary in Rockingham County, having been the framework for organizing school oversight since the 1870s, when county officials formed forty distinct school

10 "History of Cone Health," Cone Health, https://www.conehealth.com/about-us/history/; Minutes of Reidsville City Schools, February 22, 1949; and December 13, 1971; Minutes of Leaksville City Schools, see for example, February 25, 1939; and October 14, 1957; Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, April 6, 1942; and August 6, 1945. Among the business leaders who served on the Leaksville board of education were Karl Bishopric, Welsford Bishopric, and Zell Ford. The Madison delegation requested that George C. Mason and T. A. Mashburn be added to the board.

districts, each white school with its own three-man committee. This local control extended into the 1960s, as the ten white schools under the auspices of the county board of education each had their own school committeemen—from three to six local people, appointed for two-year terms. Being named to one of these committees gave dozens of whites official recognition as local leaders, experience in overseeing schools, and a broad range of prerogatives. The county board notified committees, for instance, that it was their duty to oversee the school buildings and grounds during the summer months. The chairperson of each school committee could "negotiate for a reasonable amount" with the janitor for his help in doing so. In many ways these positions were quite important in determining the trajectory of the community schools—how they were operated, how well they were maintained, and even who were hired as teachers. Local committees were directed by the county board to "re-elect" all teachers "worthy" of their jobs. Some were concerned, however, that committee members not have "wives or daughters teach in the same school" where they had oversight. School committees were also expected to handle complaints, such as those of a minister and a group of citizens concerned about the need for "guiding the youth of Mayodan."[11]

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11 State Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Biennial Report, 1948-1950*, 51; Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, July 16,1877; March 4, 1946; June 10, 1946; May 3, 1948; April 4, 1949; July 1, 1955; and April 5, 1965. The minutes noted that several teachers "had been duly elected by the local committees" in Wentworth, Ruffin, Williamsburg, and Bethany. Oversight committees for nine white schools were still appointed in 1965 at Stoneville, Bethany, Huntsville, Monroeton, Wentworth, Williamsburg, Ruffin, Happy Home, and Sadler. At this meeting, the board acknowledged for the first time that they had never included black schools in this process. With its two dozen district committeemen, Rockingham County did not have the most local school oversight in the state. Robeson County had 75 officially appointed citizens on their local school committees. For an explanation of the functioning and significance of school committees in Lumbee communities, see Malinda Maynor Lowery, *Lumbee Indians in the Jim Crow South: Race, Identity, and the Making of a Nation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 24-25, 60-62.

Generally, the committees were made up of three men, but occasionally a female was appointed, as was Mrs. J. C. Johnson of Mayodan, the sole woman serving in 1945. The next year, she was replaced on this committee by another woman, Margaret Price, but both were identified by their husbands' names. Similar to the boards of education, prominent businessmen and professionals typically served on local school committees. Even though there was a great deal of time and effort spent on identifying, appointing, and replacing members of these white school committees, neither the black schools nor the Goinstown Indian School ever had named committees during this time. So, leadership opportunities for whites, especially white men, were officially scaffolded into the county school structure, while persons of color had to determine for themselves if and how they might advocate for their schools.[12]

At times, the very naming of the committees became controversial. Three Ruffin area members were replaced in April 1953, only to have a group from that community appear at the May board meeting protesting the "manner" in which these changes had been made. A newly elected county board member reported that he had "made a careful survey" of local citizens and had determined that the "people wanted a change." Apparently because of a local dispute about the Ruffin principal, a "large number" of citizens brought their grievances to the board. They were "not satisfied with the newly

12 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, April 3, 1939; April 3, 1945; April 1, 1946; and August 2, 1954. Mrs. Lois B. Johnson was noted as "wife of J. C. Johnson, a prominent attorney," and Margaret Price as "wife of W. H. Price, Jr." Some physicians, such as Dr. Thomas B. Clay of Mayodan, also served as members of local school committees, although doctors appear to have been more widely known throughout the area and were often elected to district school boards with more authority. Members of these committees resigned or moved out of the district frequently. At most meetings, the county board dealt with replacements. See for example, Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, March 4, 1946; April 1, 1946; June 10, 1946; and April 5, 1954.

appointed school committee at Ruffin" and wanted to make sure the current principal stayed. After three hours of discussion of this "unfortunate situation at Ruffin," the county board stood by their replacements on the local school committee and said they would look for a new principal. Many members of these mostly male school committees went on to fill local government positions, including a number who later served as county commissioners, probably some of the most influential county leaders in relation to the schools. Committee members also often appeared before the county board with their requests for supplies and facilities. It is likely that the weight of the presence of people the board already knew from the appointment procedure meant that their requests were favorably addressed. In April 1953, for instance, two members of the Williamsburg committee came with the school principal asking for money for auditorium stage curtains and draperies. They were assured that "every effort would be made to grant their request" for the $750 they needed.[13]

However, despite the fact that the local school committees provided extra oversight for the rural schools, they also made it more difficult to make policy changes and often resulted in inefficiency. No community wanted its school closed or altered against its wishes, and the school committees working with school principals were very successful in garnering improvements and maintaining their control over much of education policy in the white schools. Sometimes competing groups from within these

13 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, April 7, 1953, April 21, 1953; May 4, 1953; and September 9, 1957; "Pearman Sworn In," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, July 5, 1955, 1. Leaders who moved up the ranks from local schools to county or state positions included J. O. Thomas, who left the county board to serve on the North Carolina Veterans Commission, and E. S. Powell, who resigned as a county school trustee to take a position on a state real estate board.

communities appeared before the county school board, requesting different outcomes. In 1940, a letter from the Ruffin School Committee requested that three sections and schools of that corner of the county—Ruffin, Sadler, and Happy Home—be made into one district. At the very next meeting a "large delegation" of Sadler citizens protested being included in such a merger. After this opposition, the Board took no action for such a consolidation. In a later instance, a petition signed by "a large number of citizens" was presented in April 1954, requesting that the Huntsville community school just south of Madison be transferred into the Madison City unit. At the same meeting, the local school committee from Huntsville voiced their objections to this change, arguing that those who signed the petition did so because "it was misrepresented to them." The small Huntsville School with its six teachers remained in the county system for more than a decade. The county board also had to deal with differences among citizens of the three town school districts. The Draper community, one of the small mill towns that made up the Tri-Cities area, was divided about whether to remain within the Leaksville District or to become part of the county system. In 1943, more than three hundred Draper citizens signed a petition to sever ties with Leaksville, but the county board took no action at that time. The controversy came up several times in succeeding years and competing groups of Draper citizens alternately sought to break ties with Leaksville or to remain in the township schools. One Draper delegation even went to Raleigh to protest the move before the State Board of Education. Major disagreements among school patrons could

cause turmoil over many months, but even small differences became controversial and time-consuming, making governance of the county schools even more complicated. [14]

The realities of depression and war also affected the Rockingham County schools, making their functioning even more of a challenge. Getting the money to operate the schools was often difficult. Funds were primarily made available through the state and county commissioners, but county school officials scrambled to find additional monies as they could. They sold off small abandoned wooden frame schools, both white and black, as consolidation occurred. They even took advantage of the sale of items confiscated by local law enforcement, such as when the county system got a windfall of $3,300 from "two truckloads of confiscated liquor" and used it to buy school furniture. Until school building was halted entirely in 1942 as the world war began, the county relied on labor and supplies from New Deal agencies. The National Youth Administration, for example, was approached about assisting with the building of the Vocational Agriculture building at Wentworth. When war broke out, however, funds for building were frozen in response to the "emergency condition [that] existed in the entire county."[15]

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14 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, June 3, 1940; July 11, 1940; April 5, 1943; April 5, 1954; and May 3, 1954; V. Mayo Bundy, "An Analysis of Desegregation Activities Carried Out under Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in Eight Selected North Carolina Administrative School Units, 1960-1968" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1970), 106; Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, March 24, 1947; March 31, 1947; and April 22, 1947. Huntsville joined the Madison-Mayodan District in 1969.

15 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, February 3, 1941; March 3, 1941; January 4, 1943; and June 7, 1943. For examples of use of New Deal agencies, see Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, March 6, 1939; August 1, 1939; September 5, 1939; December 4, 1939; November 3, 1941; January 5, 1942; and March 2, 1942. As an example of selling school-owned real estate, the Poteat School and lot were sold for $300. The money from the confiscated liquor was used to purchase furniture at the new Ruffin School.

Schools proved helpful in war mobilization and school leaders were actively involved in wartime preparations. To establish the number of ration books needed for Rockingham County residents, officials operated through the schools. Surveying students, they determined that more than fifty-nine thousand ration cards were needed. To fulfill their part in the war effort, school leaders leased land surrounding the Williamsburg School in the southeastern part of the county rent-free for a county-wide school garden operated by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in 1940. Later, in the midst of war conservation of food supplies, the county system rented out eighteen acres of this school's land for farming. The county's African American citizens, led by black educators from all four of the area's school systems, also made contributions to the war effort through their campaign to conserve meat. In addition, the rural county schools operated several canneries and gardens during the years of World War II to serve the public. Sweet potatoes were grown, cured, and stored for the whole community at Wentworth. While the federal government provided "practically all of the necessary equipment," the county provided the buildings at Ruffin, Wentworth, and Stoneville. Getting canneries in place took several months, however, as these buildings were constructed, sometimes with volunteer labor. Bethany citizens also negotiated for a "community cannery to be operated by the school" in the last year of the war, working with the state Supervisor of Agriculture and local officials, who appropriated $1,500 for a building to house the cannery. Even after 1945, the schools were committed to canneries built during the war. Reporting that the school facility had "canned more than 60,000 cans of food during the past year," the Wentworth agriculture teacher and the local school

committee asked for an additional thirty feet to be added to their cannery building in 1946. The board appropriated money to resurface the concrete floor at this "community cannery" a year after the war ended. These wartime canneries were not discontinued until 1954, when the boilers at Bethany, Stoneville, and Ruffin were condemned by inspectors.[16]

Even school equipment was appropriated for military wartime use. A number of the one hundred typewriters the county schools owned were given over to the ration boards in Madison and Reidsville and to the Office of Price Administration. School officials revised bus routes to cut off 350 miles per day to save gasoline needed for the war effort, and they permitted county school buses "to be used to transport local state guard companies to Fort Bragg for their annual encampment." The war also curtailed some student activities. Because of "war conditions," the 1942 commencement exercises for 181 graduates of the five rural white high schools—Ruffin, Bethany, Wentworth, Stoneville, and Mayodan—were "somewhat shortened."[17]

Staffing Rockingham County schools was also an issue throughout the 1940s and 1950s, particularly during World War II. While the war was underway, school personnel were called away to serve in the military just as others in the county. Even one of the

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16 "Rockingham Ration Survey Completed," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, March 11, 1942, 2. "Meat Sharing Plan Begun by Negroes in Rockingham," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, December 2, 1942, 13. Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, April 1, 1940; April 6, 1942; March 1, 1943; June 7, 1943; April 3, 1944; May 1, 1944; June 3, 1946; August 5, 1946; July 12, 1954; and September 19, 1955. Apparently, the canneries were still an issue the following year when there was a fire in the condemned Ruffin cannery. The county collected $12,000 after the fire and applied the funds to furniture for Wentworth Primary and a new agriculture building for Ruffin.

17 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, March 1, 1943; April 5, 1943; April 5, 1943; and October 2, 1944; "All Rockingham Schools Complete Work for Term," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, May 23, 1942, 14.

county school board members, E. S. Powell, was away for a year in the army. A "scarcity of teachers" meant that ten high school teachers were needed mid-war, and five or six vacancies needed to be filled in the county system as school started in 1944. To maintain their vocational classes during the war, the county paid "war bonuses" to agriculture, commercial, and home economics teachers. In 1942, the Leaksville system sought assistance from the Carolina Teachers' Agency, since they had no qualified applicants for several teaching positions. The agency replied to Superintendent James Holmes that "Teachers of all subjects are becoming very scarce with us." Another response from Lenoir Rhyne College read, "I am very sorry we have no one to recommend for any of your teaching vacancies." Operating schools during economic depression and war was further complicated by several outbreaks of disease in the county. Polio was an especially serious threat to mid-century Rockingham County, and a number of cases were reported involving school children. The 1944 polio "epidemic" seemed to be on decline, according to Dr. B. M. Drake, so schools could open on September 18 that year. If outbreaks were serious enough, racial lines might be crossed in their diagnosis and treatment. Just after the war ended, the threat of tuberculosis spreading even prompted district health officials to hold a drive to X-ray residents of Rockingham and Caswell counties for the disease and to offer the same clinics to both white and black. For a week in December 1945, the Leaksville High School was a venue for examinations, and "the

general public, including negroes for whom the white school is convenient" were encouraged to come to be evaluated.[18]

Dealing with more than four dozen school buildings in the aftermath of World War II, the school boards also constantly faced serious challenges in maintaining facilities. Essential needs, including drinking water, heating, and bathroom facilities, had to be provided at some schools for the first time as late as 1950. In addition, some schools were overcrowded, while others had few students and probably should have been closed and students merged into nearby facilities. Each community was empowered through their local boards and committees to view the schools through the lens of their limited neighborhood and often pressured the county board for results they saw as favorable to their local school, but that sometimes created an inefficient, unwieldy system for the county.

In addition, the dangers of fire were very real for the school systems of the county. In October 1938, the Douglass School, where six hundred African Americans attended, was destroyed in an early morning fire. The Leaksville system and the black community there had to scramble to find sufficient classroom space. Only a few months later, in July 1939, the white Ruffin High School, which had been used for fifteen years, burned to the ground. Possibly caused by a strong electrical storm, the facility valued at $100,000 was a total loss. Only a piano was saved from the blaze. The county board met in emergency

18 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, April 5, 1943; June 7, 1943; October 4, 1943; June 5, 1944; and September 4, 1944; Inserts in Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, Letter dated August 11, 1942 to Superintendent James Holmes from Carolina Teachers' Agency, Henderson, North Carolina; and Letter dated August 17, 1942 to Superintendent James Holmes from Lenoir Rhyne College; "Tuberculosis Tests Planned," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, November 28, 1945, 7.

session and quickly authorized the superintendent to start the construction of a temporary building with three classrooms, a library, and an office. They sought labor and materials from the Public Works Administration (PWA) and used the nearby teacherage, where the Ruffin principal lived, for more classrooms.[19]

Heating was also a serious issue for the schools in Rockingham County. In the midst of the Depression, the Stoneville PTA asked for improvements to the heating of their elementary classrooms. One frame school building on its campus had no heating at all as late as 1944. Poor conditions in basement rooms were a serious concern for a delegation from the Wentworth School. The cold temperature in these rooms was not healthy, they told the board, who agreed to purchase unit heating systems. The schools for African Americans located in the small towns of Rockingham County were heated with systems similar to those of the white schools—coal-fueled radiators. However, the one and two-room schools spread across the county, mainly attended by non-white pupils, used wood or coal stoves that students and teachers had to feed. One remote school in 1950 was described as having only a "temperamental pot-bellied stove" that gave off some heat "for those lucky enough to sit near it" when supplied by students who brought in fuel from an "unsightly coal pile on the front porch."[20]

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19 "Negro School Near Leaksville Razed by Flames Today," *Greensboro* (NC) *Record*, October 14, 1938, 10; "Ruffin High School Building Is Destroyed; Loss Near $100,000," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, July 30, 1939, 1; Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, August 1, 1939; September 15, 1939; and April 1, 1946. In 1946, the county collected $3,500 in fire insurance on the Chapel Hill Colored School.

20 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, April 3, 1939; December 4, 1939; and April 3, 1944; Billie Jacobs Wright, "Goins School Still Will Have One Room, One Teacher, Bright, Obedient Pupils," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, May 21, 1950, Women's Section, 15.

Water and sewer were not always easy to provide for the dozens of schools flung all across the county. Indoor bathrooms were generally available to white students by mid-century, as most schools they attended had been built to accommodate several hundred students. A number of white schools, however, had problems in regard to water. The Sadler School, in particular, had difficulty with drilling a well on-site and had to seek water on the land of a neighbor who agreed to the arrangement. The county paid a well-driller more than $800 to drill the Sadler well. Birds pecked holes in the wooden water tank, got inside, and contaminated the water for the Williamsburg School. An "old and antiquated" tank at the Wentworth School meant that water was insufficient. In the towns, business ties were very important, most often facilitating school maintenance. The Draper Junior High School for whites used the sewer lines of the Marshall-Field textile company, for instance, for the cost of only $100 per year.[21]

If water was difficult to provide for white students, then many African American schools were in even worse condition. In many instances, facing a serious lack of services, black citizens had to act on their own behalf. As school was about to open for the fall in 1940, a "small delegation of patrons from the Piney Fork colored school" met with the board and "agreed to dig a well on their school lot" if the county would buy materials and install a pump. School leaders voted to allow them to do so. Later, the county board voted to "allow the patrons of the Ruffin Colored School to dig a well on the school lot . . . without remuneration," while agreeing to furnish pipe and other

21 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, July 18, 1939; March 1, 1943; April 5, 1943; June 7, 1943; June 3, 1946, December 2, 1946; and November 3, 1947; Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, December 10, 1938.

materials needed. At a third black school, African Americans were also left to dig their own well. The "patrons of the Chapel Hill two-teacher school" did the digging, lined the walls with tile, and had to pay for the hand pump, while the county contributed funds for the tile and a top for the well. No such instance of whites having to dig their own wells for their schools appears anywhere in the minutes of the four school boards, though it is possible that in earlier decades, whites may have contributed in similar ways to small frame schools used before white consolidation.[22]

In addition to the dangers of fire and the demands of heating, water, and sewer for the schools, there was a constant stream of repairs that had to be made to the dozens of old buildings in which the approximately fifteen thousand Rockingham County students attended classes. This task must have seemed like a full-time job to school officials. In 1944, the Mayodan gym roof "was leaking badly," and a maintenance crew had to be sent "at once." At the same time, the step treads of stairways in the two-story Wentworth building were broken and needed expert repair. Even new construction could be problematic. The foundation wall of a 1946 Williamsburg School addition was an issue.[23]

Another factor that complicated the operation of the segregated schools in Rockingham County was that the four school systems owned quite a lot of property and land that demanded attention from school leaders. Dozens of properties had to be kept up and some sold from time to time, as other sites for new buildings were acquired. At

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22 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, August 12, 1940; January 3, 1944; and January 8, 1945.

23 J. E. McLean, "County Has an Enrollment of 15,700 Students," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, Fiftieth Anniversary Edition, 1938, E4; Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, December 7, 1944; and August 5, 1946.

times, school officials were unclear about exactly which lots they did own; buying and selling made nearly another full-time job for school officials handling real estate transactions. This task was especially onerous during periods of consolidation when the school boards attempted to advertise and sell the many small schools under their jurisdiction. In 1942, school leaders had to determine "whether the board still owned the old Case School lot near Madison" and, if so, then advertise it for sale. The lot was sold within weeks for $70. At nearly every meeting, there were lots identified that needed to be purchased in order to build school additions. There were also others that were no longer needed, lots where small white schools had been located but were now abandoned as consolidated schools became the order of the day. The board was then involved in the selling of lots, such as the "white Poteat School lot discontinued near Mayfield." A result of consolidation, a number of "discarded school[s]" such as the "old Apple School" dotted the county landscape. Clearing up property rights before selling this land took months and required negotiations among a number of lawyers and recalcitrant heirs. Property such as the Dan Valley School, "a three-room discarded school" about three miles from Mayodan brought significant funds. It was sold in 1943 for $220. Sometimes, former school lots brought only a small amount into the coffers, such as the Lauder School lot in Ruffin, which sold for $100, or the Mt. Herman lot, which sold for only $25. At times larger plots of land brought needed funds into the school budget. The sale of twenty-six acres of the Williamsburg School property in the extreme southeastern corner of the county brought in more than $4,500 in the midst of World War II. Neighbors of the many schools operated in the county also had various property

complaints, issues, or requests of the board. Some disputed boundaries or wanted to tie onto sewer lines. The owner of the lot where the Stone School was constructed claimed that it was built over the graves of his family members but settled with the school board for $240. In more than one case, multiple family members refused to sign and convey their part of desired land to the schools. Although a Madison School District had been organized in the 1920s, the county still held titles to the land and school property there until 1955, when Madison High School, Madison Elementary School, the Charles Drew School and Intelligence School were transferred to the Madison Board. If they had had nothing else to handle in the 1940s and 1950s, a constant pattern of clearing land titles, negotiating with land owners, and buying and selling real estate would have kept both county and city school officials very busy.[24]

Another complication to the ownership of property and upkeep demands on the county system were the teacherages and homes for principals they maintained. Attracting and keeping teachers was a constant pressure for the white schools of the county. In fact, rural America had always found it difficult to find and retain teachers. Early teachers were sometimes itinerant or boarded with local families, but twentieth century consolidated districts and longer school terms increased the demand for more and specifically trained teachers. One way of attracting young teachers out to country districts was to offer them housing that was up-to-date and comfortable, where often they

24 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, March 14, 1939; April 3, 1939; May 1, 1939; July 18, 1939; October 5, 1942; January 4, 1943; June 7, 1943; January 3, 1944; February 7, 1944; March 6, 1944; May 1, 1944; September 20, 1945; April 7, 1953; and January 1, 1955; Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, April 10, 1946. As a Reidsville attorney, future Chief Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court, Susie Sharp, was involved in one complication in the board's attempt to sell the Old Thompsonville School in the Williamsburg Township.

would live with other teachers of their gender. Teacherages were common in rural North Carolina during these years. To provide housing for the teaching staff in a rural community, many systems built these teachers' homes, where mainly single teachers lived near the schools where they worked. The primary ones for Rockingham County were at Ruffin in the northwest corner and at Bethany in the southwest quadrant. The teacherage in Bethany was especially important to the county system in retaining staff for this rural area. Over time, however, maintaining this facility was a burden. In 1948, "living conditions [were] so bad" that it was "impossible to hold teachers." The board was faced with the choice of whether to repair the facility or tear it down and rebuild. Even though they had not had one previously, the Mayodan Committee came to the board to ask for a teacherage in their small town because they believed providing housing would help them recruit needed teachers. Likewise, a group of Huntsville patrons accompanied by the principal came to the board with their "urgent need" for a principal's home and a "small teacherage." The teacherage in Ruffin was used as a temporary school after a 1939 fire, but area citizens were concerned about attracting teachers and asked that it be repaired and "placed in a livable condition" in 1944. That community also received a residence for the principal of the Sadler School. Clearly, in addition to operating dozens of schools, the county system also invested significant time and money in a limited housing program for some of their personnel.[25]

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25 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, August 1, 1939; March 6, 1944; August 6, 1945; March 1, 1948; May 3, 1948; August 2, 1948; and March 7, 1949. For more on teacherages, see Spencer J. Maxcy, "The Teacherage in American Rural Education," *The Journal of General Education* 30, no. 4 (Winter 1979), 267-74. One interesting idea Maxcy explores is W. J. Cash's critique of teacherages as a means of controlling workers.

Another complication in operating the white schools in four systems was that attendance lines were often challenged. These boundaries were important to each system because teachers were allotted to specific schools based on enrollment. Transfers from and into Caswell County were a concern, complicating the task of running the schools. The numbers in 1953, according to Superintendent Allan Lewis, were that thirty-two from Caswell attended Ruffin School (and possibly more who were enrolled at the Roosevelt Colored School near Reidsville), while at least twelve white students who lived in Rockingham attended school in the neighboring county. The same issue was true for transfers out to Guilford County in the western area of Rockingham. In 1948, officials estimated that the Huntsville District just south of the town of Madison had lost sixty-five students to Guilford County. Five years later, the problem was even worse as the local committee for Huntsville School reported that ninety pupils from Rockingham County actually attended the Stokesdale School across county lines. This situation caused harm to the Huntsville School, they argued, reducing them to a six-teacher school; school leaders noted that "Stokesdale busses have been coming a little farther into Rockingham each year until a large number of pupils have been lost." These "lost" students would have allowed the Huntsville School to gain teachers and achieve "standard" status with one teacher for each of their eight grades. The superintendent requested "transfer credit" for his system for these Rockingham students lost to neighboring counties.[26]

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26 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, May 3, 1948; and June 1, 1953.

State bus transportation for North Carolina students was implemented incrementally starting in 1917, but getting students to and from school proved a challenge. As automobiles improved, the county attempted to stay abreast of these changes but, at one point, found itself with thirteen "old, unusable" school buses, which they sold. New to county officials was the responsibility they faced for assuring safe transport for all students. Of course, running bus routes exposed students and drivers to the dangers of the road and county officials to liability for accidents. It was in December 1946 that the county system first obtained accident insurance at a cost of fifty cents per child. Only a month later, a first grader was killed as he crossed a highway near Madison to board his bus. His family was paid $1,000 in the first such claim in the county, for which they were "very appreciative."[27]

The complexities of moving students to and from school vividly showed the difficulty of operating any bus transportation system and, in particular, the impracticality of running separate black routes in each of the four school units. Even omitting the students who lived within the city limits of Leaksville, Madison, and Reidsville, who did not have access to buses in the early days of school transportation, the county was still operating what amounted to eight separate systems when it came to bus routes. Getting rural students, especially those in the extreme corners of the county, into the towns for high school was an especially demanding task. Parents complained that the "bus hauling white pupils to Leaksville High School" failed to go into Price, one of the more remote of

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27 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, December 2, 1946; February 3, 1947; and January 5, 1948; North Carolina Highway Marker Program, "First Motorized School Bus," http://www.ncmarkers.com/Markers.aspx?MarkerId=C-47. The first motorized "bus" to transport students to school in North Carolina was in Pamlico County.

the rural communities, more than once in a week. More than one hundred white high school students out in the county near the Williamsburg community had to be transported into Reidsville for classes. Because of the length of the bus trip, their school days were "very long," one citizen noted. Later, some of these rural white students attending school in town in Reidsville apparently needed some catch-up tutoring and were "given extra instruction in an effort to stimulate better scholarship." This assistance, however, meant that elementary students at two others schools had to wait an extra thirty minutes for these buses. The Reidsville Superintendent L. J. Perry argued that this confusion in bus transportation was causing a hardship on faculty and on more than five hundred elementary students who had to wait. Not long after this incident, another group of white parents complained about the irregular bus schedule in their rural community and were promised an additional bus within three weeks. Sometimes individual schools within a system were in a contest for pupils. With ambiguous attendance lines and few funds, the result was near chaos in moving both white and black students to and from schools. Competition for white students was intense. The county system even called in state authorities and reprimanded the Madison superintendent V. Mayo Bundy for sending a bus "up the mountain road" to pick up more than twenty-five students, who were actually in the Mayodan attendance zone in the county system, and taking them to Madison to school. By presenting their grievance to the county board, Mayodan citizens were able to get the use of a "spare" bus for the students who lived 1.5 miles from the school. In a later case, the county board agreed to extending one Reidsville bus route seven tenths of a

mile to pick up one first-grade girl. The bus transportation system for whites in four separate systems was unwieldy and inefficient, but accessible to most.[28]

In contrast, black pupils often saw buses headed to the white schools as they walked to their own classrooms. Such a bus often passed Dorothy James and her siblings as they walked the five miles from their home to the Madison Colored School. "I never rode a bus," she recalled. Instead the group would take shortcuts, go through woods and fields, and "trot" down the long hill and across the bridge into Madison, trying to get to school on time. Their mother, James and her sisters recollected, repeatedly "put on her hat" and went to PTA meetings, the "only black person there," to "give her spiel" about how hard it was for her children to walk so far to school. "She ended up getting a bus," James remembered, but not until years later when their youngest sister was having to walk alone to school. Sometimes neighbors assisted black children. A white social worker would sometimes pick her and her siblings up, James recalled. A farmer "east of Stoneville" wanted to work out transportation "by private contract" for "some colored children on his farm." The county system did seek "a private conveyance for certain high school students for the Reidsville colored high school" in 1941. If this arrangement was not possible, then they suggested purchasing another bus for this group of students. The following year they requested funds from the county commissioners to purchase a bus for the "negro high school," likely Reidsville. Since rural black students had to attend one of the three black high schools—in Reidsville, Leaksville, or Madison—bus transportation

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28 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, April 6, 1942; March 5, 1945; October 6, 1947; September 22, 1954; and September 19, 1955. As a board member explained, Bundy thought the road was in the Madison district and, in fact, "two or three families who live[d] at the end of the road" were assigned to Madison.

from the corners and center of the county to one of these options was often an issue. Because of no available buses, the county had to decline the request to transport "ten or eleven" African American high school students from the black Stoneville School to Douglas [sic] in Leaksville. They would need to continue in Stoneville or attend the high school in Madison, apparently making their way there on their own. Although the county board expressed "sympathy with the petitioners," board members said they could not help the two "colored patrons" who asked for bus transportation for the few high school pupils in their neighborhood of the Paw-Paw School. They would keep them in mind, "if any practical method of transportation could be worked out." More than a year later, the county board was still dealing with transportation for some younger African American pupils in this same area. Their solution was to pay a driver, Henry Carter, $1.75 per day "to transport colored children to Stoneville." This decision, they determined, was less expensive than constructing yet another "small building in an outlying area of the Stoneville school district," such as nearly all the black rural elementary students attended. The county board also made arrangements with "Lester Scales, colored" to provide private transportation for seven black high school students from the Stoneville area to the Madison Colored High School. The board members agreed to pay fifteen cents per student per day but made it clear that they "would in no sense be responsible for accident or injury to the students." Simply getting students to and from school proved a challenge

in this largely rural county. Maintaining separation of the races while operating an efficient bus transportation system was nearly impossible.[29]

In addition to all the demands of running four separate geographical school systems—staffing, funding, upkeep, and transportation—another issue consumed a great deal of time for school leaders: determining which outside groups could use the various school buildings for their meetings and other events. At every meeting, the school boards had to spend time evaluating requests. Most community groups were approved if racial lines were maintained. The textile union asked to use the Mayodan building for public meetings in the early 1940s. The county board voted to allow the Baptist Church Association to meet at the Wentworth School for two days in October 1946 for a rental fee of fifteen dollars. Use of the black schools was determined largely by their principals. These buildings were often venues for community events, as Madison Colored School, Washington High School in Reidsville, and Douglass School in Leaksville were among the largest facilities available to black citizens. If the use of a school building crossed racial lines, however, access might be denied to African Americans, as the balcony at the white Madison High School auditorium was in 1946.[30]

Building and Improving Schools

There were two school building phases in mid-century Rockingham County: the first in the late 1930s into the 1940s and then post-World War II. During the first phase

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29 Gladys McNatt, Eudoxia Dalton, and Dorothy James, interview by author, June 23, 2016; Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, October 6, 1941; April 6, 1942; May 1, 1944; June 5, 1944; July 3, 1944; September 4, 1944; October 2, 1944; September 20, 1945; and January 7, 1946.

30 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, October 4, 1943; and June 10, 1946; Minutes of the Madison City Schools, February 5, 1946. The board voted that "colored people not be allowed to occupy the balcony" on the evening of March 18.

of construction, requests came from an array of white schools for improvements, and county school officials consistently looked to the federal government through the Works Progress Administration (WPA) or the Public Works Administration (PWA) for assistance. The replacement for the white Ruffin High School was part of a significant building phase for the county system in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Even before the fire that destroyed the facility in 1939, a delegation from Ruffin had asked for several classrooms, an agriculture shop, a lunchroom, and a gymnasium. The Sadler principal and a group of patrons asked for two new classrooms to relieve overcrowding. The Wentworth principal said he was concerned about maintaining "standards of progressive schools" with five teachers working in basement rooms "unsuitable for occupancy." In a matter of weeks, requests from Madison and from Leaksville for additions to their white high schools were put into the building plans for the county, along with gymnasiums at Wentworth and Lawsonville Avenue and classrooms at Williamsburg. County school officials worked quickly with architects, who were able to present plans for all the projects requested in 1938 and 1939 at a total cost of $233,000. Once again, the board planned to ask for emergency funds from the PWA to finance these ventures. New Deal agencies and the funds they provided made significant contributions to the enhancement of educational opportunities for Rockingham County students. PWA funds also went to Stoneville for a playground project in 1939. Anticipating funds from the WPA, principals requested a six-room addition to the white Reidsville High School and an agriculture building for Bethany in 1940. All areas of the county were affected by the new state requirement of a twelfth grade, which was mandated in 1942. Requests for

improvements to white schools continued throughout the war, even though building was delayed because of the conflict.[31]

The second building phase took place in both white and black schools post-World War II, reflecting a movement identified by historians as the period of "equalization." After the conclusion of the war, several construction projects were completed in the white schools. With an enrollment of over eight hundred, the Stoneville School needed a larger lunchroom, its patrons said, because the current "sanitary arrangements were not satisfactory." Once again, the delegation was made up of some influential members of that community, including the school principal and a member of the prominent Stone family. A similar request came from the white Bethany School for a larger lunch room to replace their "totally inadequate" one, which was "constantly" being given low ratings by the Health Department. School officials responded right away to this request, visiting "seven modern lunch rooms" in the Chatham County schools for ideas and setting aside funds for building this facility. Williamsburg citizens repeatedly asked for more classrooms and lunchroom space, as they were overcrowded. If they did not get these classrooms, they insisted that the school would have to open in the fall "with a teacher in the library and two teachers in the auditorium." There was also overcrowding in a Reidsville elementary school, which resulted in moving seventh graders to another white school and using the library as a classroom. Four additional classrooms were completed

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31 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, January 31, 1939; February 6, 1939; March 6, 1939; July 1, 1939; June 3, 1940; and April 6, 1942; North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, *The History of Education in North Carolina*, 1993, 18, https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED369713.pdf. The Bethany principal reported overcrowding. Sixty students had participated in the agriculture program during the last year, but forty students had to be turned down this term.

and ready for students in October 1947. These and many other building projects were undertaken and completed at the twenty-six white schools in Rockingham County in the years leading up to the *Brown v. Board* decision.[32]

With more scrutiny and an energized populace postwar, school boards often presented their building priorities with schools for African Americans topping their lists, ostensibly showing their commitment to "equalize" educational access for the races. Rockingham County even put in place a "Special Building Committee" and paid members $5 per day for travel when they were involved in its activities. Even though materials "were difficult to procure" as the war ended, Rockingham school leaders pursued construction bonds for new buildings and additions for "both colored and white" countywide. One contractor was "unable to procure nails" for one of these school projects and the superintendent was directed to do everything he could to "locate the needed nails." This committee worked with W. F. Credle, the state director of Schoolhouse Planning, to make a "comprehensive study," considering "construction of the necessary Negro schools to consolidate all Negro schools and to bring the school plants for the white race up to date in the entire county." The county board requested $130,000 from the county commissioners "to construct buildings, purchase equipment, busses, etc. for the Negro race in the Oregon Hill section." At the same time plans were being made for new rural black schools, the Wentworth principal (and future county

32 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, April 3, 1944; April 3, 1945; April 25, 1945; June 4, 1945; December 3, 1945; and October 6, 1947; *Educational Directory of North Carolina, 1949-1950,* 91-92. Among the delegation from Stoneville was prominent citizen T. Clarence Stone, who represented Rockingham County in the North Carolina General Assembly from the 1930s through the 1960s, serving as Appropriations Chairman in the North Carolina House in the 1940s and President Pro-Tempore of the State Senate in 1963-1964.

superintendent) Allan Lewis argued his school's physical education program was inadequate and made a "stirring appeal" for a gymnasium for his school.[33]

In the early 1950s, the main building program for white students took place in the Leaksville Township as the community constructed the state-of-the-art Tri-City High School. Not long after the arrival of new Superintendent John Hough, school leaders started planning a consolidated high school for the towns of Leaksville, Spray, and Draper. Following the lead of Greensboro and "other wealthy, progressive communities," the school board began restructuring their system into a 6-3-3 format, which they considered a "more modern and practical plan." This reorganization with six elementary grades, and three grades each at junior high and senior high levels, led school officials to realize the need for "a complete new high school plant" to house grades ten through twelve. The school board purchased a thirty-four-acre lot in the central area "just off the Spray-Draper highway" and construction was well underway by the summer of 1951. In this endeavor, school officials had the help of two influential industrialists—Luther Hodges and John M. Morehead—both natives of Leaksville. Hodges, of course, had been one of the most prominent businessmen and civic leaders in the state since the late 1930s and was soon to be the state's governor. Morehead was a retired official of Union Carbide, a very wealthy philanthropist in his eighties, who had grown up in Spray. There,

33 For analysis of the "equalization" campaigns in southern schools, see Charles C. Bolton, "Mississippi's School Equalization Program, 1945-1954: 'A Last Gasp To Try To Maintain a Segregated Educational System,'" *Journal of Southern History* 66, no. 4 (November 2000), 781-814; Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, August 6, 1945; November 5, 1945; December 3, 1945; January 7, 1946; April 1, 1946; and December 2, 1946. The Building Committee was comprised of county school board members—J. L. Roberts and E. S. Powell—two county commissioners—V. H. Idol and Harry Davis—and Superintendent J. C. Colley.

at his father's textile mill, he had developed the process of manufacturing calcium carbide and over time acetylene gas, the source of his fortune. Together, the pair lent powerful support to the building of the new central high school. The board sought the philanthropist's assistance through Hodges, their "mutual friend." Ultimately, Morehead gave more than $100,000 to the effort, funding a football stadium and field house that Hodges called, a "modern palace for athletes." Morehead, who provided funds for the bell tower, the prestigious scholarship named for him, and the Morehead Planetarium at the University of North Carolina, also donated funds to the Tri-City High School for a carillon and a sound system. Hough wrote Morehead telling him that his financial help was the "greatest encouragement that our community has ever had." At the facility's dedication, a host of dignitaries participated in the ceremony, including Morehead, Hodges, then the state's lieutenant governor, and R. B. House, chancellor of the University of North Carolina. Upon completion, the dazzling new facility opened with an enrollment near six hundred but was able to house one thousand students. It was ultimately renamed John Motley Morehead High School for its benefactor. On the eve of the *Brown* decision, the Tri-Cities area had the most impressive educational facility in Rockingham County.[34]

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34 Letter from C. C. Campbell to John M. Morehead, April 7, 1950; Letter from John Hough to John M. Morehead, April 28, 1950; and Letter from John Hough to John M. Morehead, May 25, 1951, all found in Leaksville school board minutes; Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, July 4, 1947; August 26, 1949; October 10, 1949; April 28, 1950; September 14, 1950; November 20, 1950; and May 30, 1951; "Work Under Way on Tri-City Projects," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, June 10, 1951, 60; "Bids Good Luck to L. H. Hodges," *Charlotte* (NC) *Observer*, reprinted in *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, February 1, 1938, 5; Lindley S. Butler and Kimberley Hewitt, "Calcium Carbide," *NCpedia*, State Library of North Carolina, 2006; Burke Davis, "Tri-City High Dedicates Carillon," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, October 2, 1954, 12; Program of Dedication, Tri-City High School and Morehead Stadium, February 27, 1953, insert in Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, March 3, 1953; "Enrollment Slightly Less Than 4,000," Leaksville (NC) News, September 10, 1953,1; "Morehead Donates $35,000 Facility to

By mid-century, the three city systems offered education through high school to their black citizens and those in surrounding rural areas. The longest established center of black education in the county was the Booker T. Washington School in Reidsville. At the intersection of Sprinkle and Scales streets in Reidsville, the original school building served area African Americans from 1922 to 1951. As the flagship school for the unofficial "Rockingham county negro school system," Washington was the venue for numerous county and regional events. One of these took place in 1941 when "several hundred" African American students gathered at the school for an "achievement day and county-wide commencement exercises." Black students from all areas of the county, including pupils from some of the small one and two-teacher schools, participated in academic contests in "reading, writing, arithmetic, spelling, and oratory." Winners included scholars from the Ruffin, Groom's and Chapel Hill schools, and represented the many others in the county who no doubt looked to the future as students at Washington High School. Also on hand was Washington's distinguished principal, Dr. S. E. Duncan, who served the school from 1938-1946. In 1951, an entirely newly constructed Booker T. Washington High School was dedicated. Situated on sixteen acres in west Reidsville and fronting on Moss Street, this "new and handsome Negro educational unit" built at a cost of $357,000, was called "the most building for the money" in the state school system by inspectors from the Department of Public Instruction. The facility featured a science laboratory, a combination gymnasium/auditorium, a cafeteria seating three hundred, and

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Tri-City School," *Greensboro* (NC) *Record*, February 27, 1957, 1; David L. Owens, "Tri-City High School Named for Benefactor," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, June 1, 1957, 1.

"pleasant color schemes." At the building's dedication, Washington students were urged by speaker Dr. George Johnson, a dean at Winston-Salem Teachers' College, to keep up academic standards and learn the "valuable process of thinking," not just the "mere parroting" of facts. Throughout the 1950s, under the leadership of Principal H. K. Griggs, Booker T. Washington School maintained its place among the most respected schools for African Americans in central North Carolina.[35]

Under the segregated system at mid-century, the Tri-Cities of Leaksville, Spray, and Draper also had an accredited and well-respected high school for African American students—Douglass High School. Originally built as Leaksville County Training School, a ten-teacher Rosenwald school in 1927, the county board was ready in 1938 to advertise bids for the construction of five additional classrooms to this building. On the night of October 13, however, the Leaksville Colored School was "completely destroyed by fire." So, instead school officials applied $35,000 for the "erection of an entirely new school building" for African Americans in the communities of Leaksville, Spray, and Draper, as they had nowhere to have school. Board members applied for and received a Public Works Administration (PWA) for a grant of $28,000 to construct a new school with at least sixteen classrooms for blacks. "Under PWA supervision," the new Leaksville Colored School building was completed in September 1939. Since "this amount was part of fire insurance money collected when the building had been burned" a year earlier, the

35 "Booker T. Washington High School," The Historical Marker Database, https://www.hmdb.org/marker.asp?marker=63051; "Rockingham Negro School Finals Held: Achievement Day at Reidsville Is Well Attended," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, May 6, 1941, 5; Lois V. Edinger, "Samuel Edward Duncan, Jr.," *NCpedia,* State Library of North Carolina, https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/duncan-samuel-edward-jr; "New Negro School in Reidsville Is Dedicated," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, September 24, 1951, 14.

county board voted to give the Leaksville district $866.74 "for the Leaksville Colored School Library and other equipment." Renamed for the renowned abolitionist, Frederick Douglass, the school flourished in subsequent years and, like the two other black schools in city systems in Madison and Reidsville, was of great importance in the African American community circa 1950. In 1951, the school's significance as a center of black solidarity in the area was illustrated as it served as the venue for a huge celebration of the Emancipation Proclamation, sponsored by the local Knights of Pythias, a black fraternal organization. Bands from Burlington and Madison joined Douglass musicians in a procession. "All Negroes in Rockingham and adjoining counties" were invited to "bring floats, cars, wagons, or horses" for a parade to start at the Henry Street Y in Leaksville and end at Douglass School for an address by North Carolina Governor Kerr Scott.[36]

During these years, supervision of the African American schools was largely left to the black community. As a result, black citizens developed their own leaders and chipped away at Jim Crow restrictions within a segregated system. In schools large enough to have a designated principal, such as the town high schools in Madison, Leaksville, and Reidsville, these educators worked with their faculties to provide leadership in the schools and in the broader community. At the end of each academic year, school boards typically authorized black principals to "elect" the teachers they thought suitable for the next fall. In smaller one and two-teacher schools for black

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36 Fisk University Rosenwald Fund Card File Database, "Leaksville (C. T. S.)," Fisk University Special Collections and Archives, https://www.fisk.edu/academics/library/special-collections-and-archives; Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, November 14, 1938; September 5, 1939; and February 5, 1940; "Scott To Address Emancipation Program," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*," March 30, 1951, 21. The school was named for Frederick Douglass, but the name was often misspelled as "Douglas" in school records, newspaper articles, and state educational reports.

students, nearly the entire educational program was in the hands of individual teachers (mostly women) who did everything from making sure the building was heated to teaching dozens of students ranging in age from six years to sixteen. Another means of supervision of black schools during segregation was through the Jeanes program. In 1940, a Mr. Johnson came to the county leaders and offered himself as a "Jeans" [sic] teacher who could assist in the "practical supervision of the county colored faculty." The board seemed to know little of the program, which had been in place in the black schools of North Carolina since 1908. Founded and endowed by Quaker Anna T. Jeanes, the Negro Rural School Fund sponsored teachers who instructed other educators, at first in "simple industrial arts," and later as academic supervisors. Although forty of the state's counties had regularly appointed Jeanes Supervising Teachers to oversee the instruction of African American students for decades, Rockingham County did not do so until 1944 when Clarence C. Watkins was named a supervising Jeanes teacher and was allotted $25 a month as a travel allowance, as his duties included "working with the other forty-two colored teachers in the County." Beginning as a teacher and principal at the Ruffin Colored School, a small two-teacher school in the northeast section of the county, Watkins was appointed in 1941 to do extra duties as a building program in the county was in progress. Later as Jeanes lead teacher and Negro Supervisor, Watkins wore many hats and was involved in every aspect of black education in the county during the segregation era. He frequently came to county school board meetings with delegations from various schools under his oversight and advocated for improvements. At times, he acted on his own on behalf of black students. In the summer of 1953, for example, he transported at

his own expense "a number of school children from their homes to the county schools" so that they could receive dental work from the State Health Department. "After some discussion," he was allotted some months later his requested reimbursement of $42.24 for this effort.[37]

Ultimately, Watkins acted as the black superintendent for the county schools, serving throughout the periods of consolidation, desegregation, and even after integration in 1969. One example that illustrated the racial inequities of the system he faced early on was that of providing him office space. Since he had no office in the county courthouse as the white supervisors did, Supervisor Watkins appeared before the county board in August 1953 requesting such. The board's solution was to divide "a large rest room for Negro women on the third floor in the courthouse" and create Watkins's office. A "partition could be built so as to provide office space for the Negro Supervisor," they proposed, "and still retain some space for the rest room." Clearly, the black supervisor was not treated as others in similar positions in the school system. Watkins's work was bolstered, however, by the agency of African American citizens throughout the county.

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37 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, June 3, 1940; April 7, 1941; June 2, 1941; October 22, 1944; October 6, 1947; and February 10, 1954; Wiley J. Williams, "Jeanes Fund," *NCpedia*, https://www.ncpedia.org/jeanes-fund. For more on the Jeanes teachers, see "The Women Who Ran the Schools: The Jeanes Teachers and Durham County's Rural Black Schools," Durham County (NC) Public Library, https://durhamcountylibrary.org/exhibits/jeanes/teachers.php; and Jane E. McAllister and Dorothy M. McAllister, "Adult Education for Negroes in Rural Areas: The Work of the Jeanes Teachers and Home and Farm Demonstration Agents," *Journal of Negro Education* 14, no. 3 (Summer 1945), 331-40; State Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Educational Directory of North Carolina, 1943-1944*, "Jeanes Supervising Teachers—Negro," 10; State Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Educational Directory of North Carolina, 1938-1939*, 57. The fact that in the board minutes the name of the Jeanes program is misspelled and there is a blank line for the first name of the faculty member requesting that he be appointed to the position suggests that the county officials knew very little about the program or the faculty of the black schools under their auspices. The teacher involved was likely Marion Johnson, who appeared before the board once again the next year urging consolidation of the African American schools in the county.

Although they had no official school committee structure sanctioned by the district, black school supporters were active on behalf of their students. A delegation from the Wall Colored School requested an additional teacher in 1944. Their one teacher had approximately seventy pupils—in all grades, one through eight. The school's overcrowding was not immediately addressed, but by the 1949-1950 school year, the school did have an additional teacher. As noted throughout this dissertation, other groups of black parents and school patrons came often before the school boards to make their requests.[38]

In the postwar period, it must have been clear to almost anyone familiar with any of the dozens of small, mostly one-teacher black schools in the county that something had to be done to consolidate them and provide better facilities for African Americans. New schools were needed in several locations in the county. The black community had certainly been acutely aware of the need for decades and were persistent in their lobbying of the county board for consolidation and other improvements in their schools. During World War II, they came regularly before school officials to explain their requests. They presented their case as early as 1939, when "a colored delegation" appeared before the county school board and "presented a letter signed by colored patrons and taxpayers of six schools, requesting a consolidated school." A second delegation of more than forty persons appeared again in 1940, again asking for "consolidation of colored schools wherever feasible in the county." This time they were led by the black farm agent, who

38 Walt Wintermute, "County Schools for Black Students Bring Back Memories," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, May 31, 1985, 3; Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, February 7, 1944; and August 3, 1953; State Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Educational Directory of North Carolina, 1949-1950*, 91.

took an important leadership role and also requested that a black agriculture teacher be hired for Reidsville's Washington High School. Black citizens spoke of very small school lots and the need for wells to provide water for their pupils. African Americans clearly stated some of their concerns, and the board "took the matter under advisement." Another group from a different corner of the county ("colored patrons from Chapel Hill and Ruffin, and other nearby colored schools") came the following month to petition for a consolidated black school in their area, combining facilities for Ruffin, Sadler, Poteat, Mayfield, Chapel Hill, Locust Grove, and Glen schools. They even specified their preferred location for this new school: "in the vicinity of Chapel Hill." Once again, their petition was "taken under advisement." Yet another delegation made up of R. L. Hannon, Marion Johnson, and Clarence Watkins requested consolidation of the negro schools in April 1941. Again, the board took no action.[39]

In addition to these repeated calls for attention to the small rural black schools, as the war ended, serious overcrowding was also reported at Washington Negro High School in Reidsville, with 149 rural students attending the long-established city school. The school day had been extended because of lack of rooms. Only one-fourth of the students were being served lunches due to the fact that one regular classroom used for home economics was also the "cafeteria." As a result, state officials had refused to certify home economics credits for courses taught under such conditions and therefore had

39 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, April 3, 1939; February 5, 1940; April 1, 1940; and April 7, 1941; Rockingham County Cooperative Extension, *100 Years of Rockingham County Cooperative Extension Centennial Celebration Program*, November 20, 2014. Beginning with the first black farm agent in the state, Neil Alexander Bailey, who served in Rockingham County from 1910 through 1915, the role of the agricultural agent became significant in local African American leadership.

refused to allot the Reidsville schools a black home economics teacher. The Reidsville superintendent feared the school program would be "greatly impaired, as most of the girls now take home economics." The school had neither indoor space for physical education or games nor study hall space. Three classrooms had no natural light.[40]

When the first black delegations had requested consolidation of their schools in 1939, the superintendent of the county system, J. C. Colley, had been directed by the board to study the possibilities. He did so and made this project the focus of his master's work at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. Colley surveyed, photographed, and recorded essential information on thirty-one different black schools across the county and in 1944 submitted a plan for an orderly process of consolidation, including proposed new district lines, possible locations for new schools, and even bus routes. His thesis serves as a valuable source of information about the county's schools for blacks in the mid-twentieth century. Colley found a system of poor, inadequate rural schools for the county's black pupils that made it "manifestly impossible to give the Negro pupils the instruction to which they are entitled." Superintendent Colley emphasized the "gross inequity of public school facilities between the races" by including one white elementary school—Monroeton—as a contrast. In 1944, the total value of all thirty-one schools "for the colored race" studied by Colley, including the structures and all of their contents, was $48,700. Monroeton's building, furniture, and equipment for seven teachers was worth $43,600—nearly as much as all the rural schools for African Americans combined, while they housed more than fifty teachers and close to two thousand students. That "the white

40 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, December 3, 1945.

race has been given preference in school building programs" was clear, Colley concluded in 1944, but post-war equalization efforts closed this breach. Consolidation and the construction of new facilities for black students were essential parts of these efforts, developments which African American citizens under Jim Crow welcomed as the most viable way to improve education for their children.[41]

Before the consolidation of all the small rural black schools and the construction of new facilities for African Americans in the early 1950s, the county school board attempted to make some adjustments. Because of these board actions, several black teachers lost their positions when their small buildings were closed. Four schools in the western area were closed because of "low attendance" and the loss of teacher allotments. In 1944, the white county school board voted to discontinue the Price Negro School in the northwest corner of the county because of "extremely low attendance" and transferred the teacher to the Jones Negro School in the center of the county, which was "badly overcrowded," with sixty-six students enrolled and only one teacher. Price's enrollment was only thirteen for the 1943-1944 year, half of the number of students the school had had in 1938. Two other schools in the northwest corner of the county, Paw-Paw and Martin, were closed not long after Price school, and their students bused to the Madison Colored School. In the center of the county, Locust Grove school was also closed in 1947 and their students transferred to the Glenn School; since no bus could be allocated for them, they were transported under a private contract. The teachers, however, were not transferred along with their students. It is reasonable to see why some African American

41 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, April 3, 1939; Colley, "A Plan for Consolidation," 91, 90, 61.

teachers opposed consolidation efforts, if as these closures showed them, it could mean the loss of their jobs.[42]

In addition to the detailed study by Superintendent Colley and repeated petitions from black citizens, perhaps another stimulus for consolidation of black schools was a request by white school leaders from Madison for a new black school for their community. Just at the end of World War II, the Superintendent and two prominent white school board members appeared before the county board asking that the next budget include funds for a new school for African Americans. The "present facilities," some the result of the Rosenwald building campaign of the 1920s, were twenty years later deemed "neither adequate nor sanitary." In this meeting, the county board discussed "a completely consolidated Negro school program," and appointed a committee of five to study and make recommendations. With this encouragement, the Madison community made quick progress in obtaining a new school plant for their African American students. The Madison board authorized the use of all its share of the county bond money of 1947, $125,000, to build a "Negro union school" and plans got underway, with bids for the building received in July 1949. Built as a part of the equalization campaign in Rockingham County, the new buildings in Madison for African Americans in the western sections were a welcomed improvement, long desired by the black community. At its completion, the school consolidated the pupils of the small rural schools of Galloway Grove, Good Will, and Hayes Chapel with the students of the Madison Colored School

42 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, April 3, 1944; and July 7, 1947; Colley, "A Plan for Consolidation," Table V, 12; Table I, 8.

on West Decatur Street. Students came to the new school from all over western Rockingham County and some from eastern Stokes County. The facility sat on a twenty-acre tract convenient to many black residents of Madison, just at the edge of the Freetown section, at a location identified earlier by the county superintendent as being advantageous.[43]

The final school plant was, indeed, "modern," with fifteen classrooms, a library, science laboratory, cafeteria, vocational building with a workshop, and an auditorium-gymnasium, the equivalent structure to what white students in Madison had access to about two decades earlier. The dedication of the Drew facility was held on a Sunday afternoon with much celebration from the community. An eighty-member school choir presented two "negro spirituals" and a Latin hymn, while the school band played an overture. A special part of the program was a choral reading in honor of the school's namesake, the "eminent physician," Dr. Charles Drew. The speaker was the state Director of Negro High Schools, Dr. S. E. Duncan, who was closely linked to black education in the county, having earlier served at Reidsville's Booker T. Washington High School as principal. The Drew principal, John W. Dillard, put the building of the school in broader terms, as a place to serve students' needs, but also to meet "the needs of our democratic society."[44]

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43 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, June 4, 1945; V. Mayo Bundy, *An Analysis of Desegregation Activities*, 106; Minutes of Madison City Schools, July 7, 1949; "$179,500.00 Received Here for Schools Out of School Bond Issue," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger,* February 17, 1949, 1; "Construction Starts on Negro School," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger,* July 14, 1949, 1; "Negro High School Is To Be Erected Soon," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger,* June 23, 1949, 1; "Dedication of Drew School Sunday," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger,* October 27, 1950, 1.

44 "Dedication of Drew School Sunday," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, October 27, 1955, 1; "New Madison Negro School To Be Dedicated," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, October 28, 1955, 12.

The most "modern" aspect of the Drew School was perhaps in its namesake: Dr. Charles R. Drew, the noted surgeon and blood specialist, who had been killed in an automobile accident about forty miles away from Madison in April 1950. Whereas two of the other new schools for African Americans in the county were given the traditional names of Roosevelt and Lincoln, American presidents revered by the black community, and the other—Stone—named for the local white family who had advocated for the school, the name of Charles R. Drew came from Madison's black community in response to a recent tragic event and in honor of a black scientist and physician. In the months before the school's naming in September 1950, an essay contest was held among the institution's future students to suggest an appropriate name, one of a distinguished African American who would be an inspiration. The faculty selected Douglas Campt's submission of Dr. Drew. Perhaps Campt had been influenced by an editorial of praise for Drew that had appeared in the Madison newspaper, *The Messenger,* less than two weeks after Drew's death, written by the editor, Russell Spear, who lived only three houses down the block from the Campt family. In his reflection on Drew, "A Great Man Passes," Spear spoke of the renowned physician as "Charlie," a college classmate at Amherst in Massachusetts, whom he admired as a "splendid student," fine athlete, and outstanding in every respect. He conveyed Drew's many contributions in "the field of blood plasma" and as the "organizer of Blood Banks" and expressed his gratification that his college class had started a scholarship in Drew's name. In naming the local school for Drew, the Madison community embraced the involvement of African Americans in their schools,

expressed the progressive views of many of its members, and affirmed the importance of black achievement in its educational structure.[45]

By the end of the decade, but after Colley had left the county for a position briefly with a publishing company and later for the Department of Education at Elon College, new schools or additions for black students were also built in three areas of the county district: at Stoneville, Lincoln, and Roosevelt. Before building these new facilities, however, an integral part of consolidating the black schools was the sale of the two dozen or so old buildings and lots. These often-complicated transactions, including the closing and sale of black schools and lots, were completed by all-white school boards and other school representatives largely on white terms. Most of the inadequate frame schools still owned by the county, buildings that had been used by black students for decades, were advertised for sale to the highest bidder in December 1950. Some were difficult to sell and did not bring many funds to the county. When the Piney Fork School was eventually sold in 1953, for example, the board found that the land the school was on was actually partly the property of a neighbor. They sold the school and lot to him for $300 because "no one else would be willing to buy the property." At other locations owned by the county school system, no buildings still stood. The land where the "old Latticue colored

45 "Auto Accident Kills Noted Physician," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, April 2, 1950, 1; "Name Proposed for New Colored School," *The* (Madison NC) *Messenger*, September 28, 1950, 1; Russell M. Spear, "A Great Man Passes," *The* (Madison NC) *Messenger*, April 13, 1950, 2. For an intriguing study of Dr. Charles R. Drew's fatal accident, the myth of his being denied care at a white hospital, and his importance in African American history, see Spencie Love, *One Blood: The Death and Resurrection of Charles R. Drew* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 5. Although the much-repeated legend that Drew had bled to death because he was refused admittance to a white hospital is "not literally true," Love argues, it "demonstrates the continuing psychological trauma of segregation and racism in American life."

school" had been before it had burned several years earlier was typical of the real estate owned by the county school system. As Superintendent Colley had noted in his study of the small black schools that dotted the countryside, several had been built "from salvaged materials from buildings abandoned by the white race" and were worth very little. In 1944, the total value of all twenty-six black schools owned by the county was only $26,900.[46]

Since school officials were not likely to use the land for school purposes again, the logical plan was to sell the lots. Yet, even though African American students were not being adequately provided for at these facilities, other issues existed for the black community when considering these sites. Many of these small frame buildings had been the products of their own hands. Some were built with Rosenwald funds and with significant contributions in goods, work, and time by the black communities they served. Many were built alongside rural black churches whose members gave the land for the school buildings and provided upkeep of the structures, for much of the time operating on their own with minimal attention from white school boards and few funds from county coffers. It was difficult for communities to suddenly abandon places that had had meaning for them for generations. The old buildings not sold immediately were sometimes seen as possible centers for gatherings by black communities for whom the facilities, as limited and outdated as they were, held some significance for their neighborhoods. Perhaps the most successful example of putting older black school

46 Legal Notices, *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, December 22, 1950, 4; Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, December 2, 1946; January 3, 1948; and April 21, 1953; Colley, "A Plan for Consolidation," 23. No buildings remained on the Locust Grove and Latticue sites.

buildings to new use was in Madison, as the old Madison Colored School was purchased, renamed for a former student's sister, and operated as a community center for a decade.[47]

Similar to the process in locating the place for the Charles Drew School in Madison, identifying the site for the Stoneville black school was not controversial. It was located on land near black residents and the Rosenwald frame building from the 1920s. Both Madison and Stoneville schools were located very near the sites proposed by Superintendent Colley in his 1944 thesis on consolidation. However, determining where two of the three new county schools for black students would be located—those in the Ruffin area and in the Elm Grove community south of Reidsville—was contentious and took many months. There was quite a bit of back and forth between white school officials and black community leaders about their appropriate locations. In 1946, county Superintendent Colley recommended that the board purchase a "lot for the proposed colored school at or near Oregon Hill" in the northeastern quadrant of the county, and set aside $4,100 for this acquisition "if a lot for the colored race" were not purchased then. The following month, the county board requested $130,000 from the county commissioners to build this school. However, a month later, a white delegation from the Ruffin area had a different idea: "turn the present Sadler school over to the colored race

47 For an example of black citizens requesting use of their former small schools, see Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, June 14, 1948; Denise Johnson, "Restoration of Charles Drew School Continues on Pace," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, January 29, 1986, C1; Allison DeBusk, "Group Organizes To Reinvent the Madison Colored School," RockinghamNow.com, August 6, 2015. The Madison Colored School building, one of the Rosenwald structures built in the county in the 1920s, also saw some use as a warehouse, but is now under study by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and has received a grant for restoration. The intent of the Charles Drew Alumni Association who own the building is to create a community center of benefit to a variety of groups in the area.

and construct a new school for the white race" in that community. The new construction should go to whites and the old building handed down to African Americans. The board took their proposal into consideration. The discussion of the Ruffin location continued into the next year when the board decided to consult with highway officials to determine potential changes in the roads of that township and how they might affect the construction and access to a new school there. Ultimately, the Ruffin area location was largely a choice of the white school board, as they agreed in late 1947 to "visit the Ruffin District, select a lot . . . and negotiate for purchase," with little or no black input. They were interested in a fifteen- acre lot adjacent to the present Negro school and negotiated with the owner for several months to no avail. Eventually, another ten-acre lot was purchased for a total of $2,500, three years after the board first addressed this issue, despite the high banks at the site that had to be eliminated later to prevent flooding and water damage.[48]

The location of the proposed black school in the southeastern part of the county near Reidsville was also debated and was even more a point of contention between blacks and whites than the Ruffin site. African Americans from the communities of Haw River and Elm Grove attempted to influence this decision by appearing repeatedly before the county board. They recommended that the new school be built on a site on Highway 29 near the old Elm Grove School on land owned by Professor McRae's widow, a site with significance to their delegation. James A. McRae had been a noted educator and leader

48 Colley, "A Plan for Consolidation," Map, 66; Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, March 4, 1946; April 1, 1946; June 3, 1946; July 7, 1947; November 3, 1947; January 5, 1948; March 1, 1948; March 7, 1949; and October 30, 1949.

of that community for decades, having served as principal of the black high school in Reidsville from its inception in 1918 to 1937. In dedicating their 1950 yearbook to McCrae's memory, Booker T. Washington High School seniors called him "a disciple of racial good will and cooperation." Placing the new school on a site associated with this revered black educator would, no doubt, have been meaningful to that community. In return for selecting this site (and also mindful of modeling good citizenship in the postwar mode), the group promoting it to the school board offered to "build a community cannery at no expense to the county."[49]

In November 1947, black school patrons returned for a third time to request that the school board select the McRae site for the proposed new school but were told that the board members would choose the "most practical location for everybody concerned." A year later, a proposed Elm Grove site was selected—not the location that the community's African American citizens had earlier requested—but a site just south of Reidsville that they approved of. "The members of this group were very enthusiastic" about the choice, wrote Superintendent Allan Lewis. Yet, six months later, there was still disagreement. "A delegation of white people from this area" came to the board to protest the proposed location, pointing out "that so many white people live very close to this proposed site that it is objectionable." At this point in the meeting, Negro School Supervisor, Clarence C. Watkins, spoke to offer a solution to this issue that had been going on for three years. Watkins had "talked with a large number of school patrons in

49 *The Pioneer*, Yearbook, Booker T. Washington High School, Reidsville, North Carolina, 1950, Dedication page; Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, August 4, 1947; and March 1, 1948.

this area" and with them had identified an alternate site, property belonging to an African American, John Bell. The black community accepted this location despite the fact that it was "not on a hard-surfaced road," and the board voted to purchase the twelves acres for a total of $2,500. The future Roosevelt School for black students grades one through eight finally had a building site. To save money, contracts for all three new county schools were offered at the same time. Over the next year, all three buildings were completed and were ready for the beginning of the school year in September 1950. Curiously, all three of these new schools built for African Americans—Roosevelt, Lincoln, and Stone—were plagued with faulty roofs in the months just after their construction, suggesting a flaw in design, hastiness in building, or faulty materials.[50]

In the early 1950s, as the cases that were bundled to become *Brown v. Board of Education* made their way through the courts, local officials continued to fund and improve white schools. The state of North Carolina approved a bond issue of $50 million for school construction that included $140,000 for Rockingham County. In preparation for more school building, the county board transferred deeds to land where Madison schools were located to the Madison board, because of the need to expand the "facilities at the Madison white school." In the midst of the Cold War, the push for science and math instruction could be seen all the way from Washington down to the local level. Rockingham County had "serious needs in science departments" to upgrade equipment and stay accredited.[51]

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50 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, November 3, 1947; November 19, 1948; March 7, 1949; April 4, 1949; and April 21, 1953; "Three New Consolidated Colored Schools in County This Fall," *Madison* (NC) *Messenger*, September 7, 1950, 6.

51 Rockingham County Board of Education Minutes, February 9, 1953; and October 5, 1953.

In the early 1950s, the school boards in Rockingham County spent much of their time and energy discussing with architects about future building needs. Equalization was a priority and major projects at schools for African Americans topped the lists of all four school boards. In 1953, the "urgent" building needs listed by the county board were a primary building with twelve classrooms for Wentworth, home economics buildings for both Wentworth and Bethany schools, and a combination auditorium/ gymnasium at Stone Colored School. White leaders from Stoneville (T. C. Stone and Steve Smith) came to the county board and asked them to move the gymnatorium at the black Stone School up to number one priority on the building needs list. They were told the board had already determined that it was second to the need of building twelve elementary classrooms at the white Wentworth School, which was more urgent. By January of 1954, however, the addition at the black school in Stoneville budgeted at $65,000 was moved up to number one priority on the county board's building list. To move ahead with this new construction, the "old wood frame building" on its campus (which appears to have been the Rosenwald School built there in 1922) was sold to a black citizen for $226.[52]

On the eve of the *Brown v. Board* decision, all four units—Madison, Leaksville, Reidsville and the county system—had in place newly constructed or improved facilities for African Americans. Also in place were the superintendents who would lead the Rockingham County's four school systems, not only in the years immediately following the Supreme Court mandate to desegregate, but up to 1970 when integration finally

52 Rockingham County Board of Education Minutes, February 9, 1953; April 7, 1953; January 4, 1954; and February 10, 1954; Fisk University Rosenwald Fund Card File Database, "Stoneville School," Fisk University Special Collections and Archives, https://www.fisk.edu/academics/library/special-collections-and-archives.

occurred across the county. On the eve of the *Brown* decision, Superintendent C. C. Lipscomb led the schools in Reidsville, where the community had both white and black schools long established and noted for their rigor and student achievements. Lipscomb, who served in Reidsville's public schools over three decades, had moved from the principalship of Reidsville High School in the early 1940s to the position of superintendent after World War II. The Reidsville area had a larger black population than the rest of the county at about 40 percent, an active National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) chapter, and good-paying jobs for both whites and blacks. Both black and white workers at the American Tobacco Company, the primary Reidsville employer, were organized in their own unions and exerted influence in their community.[53]

In the western part of the county, the Madison City Schools shared some attributes with Reidsville twenty-five miles to the east. Madison also had a legacy of strong schools for both whites and blacks, where the numbers of black students exceeded 35 percent of the school enrollment. At the Charles Drew School, Madison boasted a new campus for African Americans that local black leaders had largely planned and put in place, even naming it for a contemporary black physician. The newest superintendent to the county, V. Mayo Bundy, had just replaced J. C. Lassiter, "a good school man," who had led the system for thirty-eight years, since 1915. Bundy, who took on the leadership

53 *Renocahi*, Yearbook of Reidsville High School, 1944, 5, http://www.ancestraltrackers.net/nc/rockingham/reidsville-high-school-yearbook-renocahi-1944.pdf; Julius J. Gwyn, "Reidsville, NC: Establishing Civil Rights Without Chaos or Violence (2003)," 3, 8, 17, 21; Rockingham County Historical Collections, Gerald B. James Library, Rockingham Community College, Wentworth, North Carolina.

of the Madison City Schools in the summer of 1953, was already giving indications of his progressive views on race and began to prepare his community for eventual desegregation.[54]

Allan (Doc) Lewis was superintendent of the rural unit, the Rockingham County Schools, having been named superintendent in July 1946. His predecessor, Superintendent J. C. Colley, had left the county and recently joined the Department of Education at nearby Elon College, where he would be a professor of Education until 1968. Lewis, an energetic and dedicated leader of the rural system, would serve as Rockingham County Superintendent through the first year of integration in 1970. Under his watch, the consolidation of the black schools was accomplished and the county system boasted of three new buildings for African American students, grades one through eight. Rural black high school students still had to attend either Charles Drew in Madison, Douglass in Leaksville, or Washington in Reidsville. In his system on the eve of the *Brown* decision, five white high schools across the county—Mayodan, Bethany, Ruffin, Stoneville, and Wentworth—were centers of community pride for their citizens and well supported. Lewis was especially enthusiastic about student dramatics and other arts performances and was a noted regional leader in the scouting program. A strong proponent of travel for students, he often accompanied them on school trips. He was

54 V. Mayo Bundy, *An Analysis of Desegregation Activities*, 107; W. C. Burton, "Madison's School Case Hinging on Mystery," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, May 2, 1953, 1, 3. A petition signed by nine hundred supporters tried to get Lassiter to stay on as superintendent, so Bundy began his new job in Madison under some controversy. School board member Carl Lauten called Lassiter "a good school man."

interested in keeping up-to-date on educational issues and frequently represented the school system at conferences across the United States.[55]

In the months leading up to the *Brown* decision, leaders in the mill towns of Leaksville, Spray, and Draper in the northeast section of the county were in an especially promising environment. They were glowing in the opening of their new Tri-City High School, a state-of-the-art facility for whites, which had been partially funded through business magnate John M. Morehead, who had family ties to the area. The community was also relishing its strong connections to Luther Hodges, "a distinguished fellow townsman," who was now North Carolina's Lieutenant Governor. In a 1953 report to the Township Board of Trustees, John M. Hough, who was in his seventh year as superintendent, exhibited plenty of confidence in their status as a "unified, courageous, and effective" board. A visiting committee from the Division of School Planning had just surveyed Leaksville Township Schools and reported the same week *Brown* was announced that the local system had a "splendid instructional program," that buildings were "maintained unusually well," and that there was "little overcrowding in any of the schools with the exception of the Douglas [sic] Negro School."[56]

An additional six to eight classrooms were already planned for Douglass and represented the school board's top building priority but were not yet in place by the time

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55 J. Allan Lewis Collection, Rockingham County Historical Collections, Gerald B. James Library, Rockingham Community College, Wentworth, North Carolina, http://www.rockinghamcc.edu/library/findingaids/ jallanlewiscollection.pdf; Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, July 1, 1946; and August 5, 1946; "Funeral Today for Retired Elon Professor," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, November 2, 1970, 21.

56 "Dedication Program," Tri-City High School and Morehead Stadium, February 27, 1953; Superintendent John Hough, "In Retrospect, Progress Report of the Leaksville Township Schools from July 1, 1947 to Jan. 1, 1953"; Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, May 13, 1954.

school opened in September 1954. This overcrowding was confirmed by the local columnist for the newspaper section "Colored News," who reported that Douglass School, the main facility for African Americans in the district, was anticipating an "overwhelming enrollment" and would be challenged to find enough room for almost six hundred students. The previous year, pupils had been "crammed into every nook and corner" and rooms had already been partitioned. This emphasis on expanding the black school lagged behind other "equalization" efforts in the county but signaled an intention to maintain segregated schools in the district. Leaders involved in school policy in the Leaksville Township Schools included a few African American PTA representatives and black administrators but primarily were white business owners, mill supervisors, and professionals. White school officials were much more focused during this time on enhancing trade skills at their own special Vocational School and improving existing facilities throughout the unit, rather than on issues of race.[57]

The entire county, and especially the Tri-Cities area, were exceptionally well connected to state government through Hodges, who had retired to his hometown of Leaksville in 1950 after a very successful career as a textile executive with worldwide Marshall Field operations and who would be Governor of North Carolina in a matter of months. Scores of local white leaders attended the Methodist church with Hodges and had served with him in Rotary, an organization that Hodges had led locally and at the district level. Most had known Hodges for decades as a business leader. With Hodges in

57 Minutes of the Leaksville Township Schools, January 27, 1954; March 31, 1954; and August 23, 1954; Frank Williams, "Enrollment Expected to Reach Peak," Colored News, *Leaksville* (NC) *News,* September 2, 1954.

Raleigh at this time, most of the citizens of Leaksville, Spray, and Draper naturally looked to the state and followed its cautious lead in regard to school policy and race. The Leaksville superintendent, John Hough, had come to the Tri-Cities area of Leaksville, Spray and Draper in 1947 to lead the school system there. He was a leader in the state superintendents professional organization, a key administrator in the area of state high school athletics, and a close personal friend of the future North Carolina Governor, Luther Hodges. Hough would lead the Tri-Cities through school desegregation and unite the schools during the merger of the three mill towns into what is known today as Eden, North Carolina.[58]

Even in communities that had large majorities of white citizens and long-established white leadership, maintaining the demands of Jim Crow separation of the races in the segregated school systems of Rockingham County required hard work. The multiple school units, school boards, and local committees created a framework that scaffolded white leadership into the county structure, at the same time complicating day-to-day operations. The cooperation of black citizens with white school leaders in obtaining improvements for their segregated schools, however, did not mean that the elimination of Jim Crow restrictions was not their ultimate goal. Faced with the likelihood of many years more of forced school segregation, African Americans worked within the system, set about to increase the quality of their own schools, and made the best of a world in which they were considered by many to be second-class citizens. On

58 Letter from John Hough to Luther H. Hodges, July 25, 1952, Luther Hartwell Hodges Papers, Box 148, Folder 1755, Southern Historical Collections, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; "Elected Director of Rotary International at Paris, France," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, June 4, 1953, 1; Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, July 4, 1947.

the eve of the *Brown v. Board* decision, numerous leaders, both black and white, were experienced in school administration and were poised to take the paths that they saw as appropriate to advance the schools of Rockingham County.

CHAPTER V

THE AFTERMATH OF *BROWN*: WHITE RESISTANCE STRATEGIES IN ROCKINGHAM COUNTY

The May 17, 1954, Supreme Court ruling that "separate educational facilities" based on race were "inherently unequal," and therefore unconstitutional, stunned North Carolina as it did the rest of the South, where racial segregation was the foundation of its social order. The segregationist White Citizens' Councils and their offshoots, such as the Patriots of North Carolina, would label this day "Black Monday," "'black' signifying grief, destruction and death." Although most Southerners did not immediately feel the effects of the decision, ordinary citizens and especially political officials seemed to grasp the importance of the moment and the potential of the ruling to change the structure of southern life. Some of the first reports even equated the twelve-page *Brown* decision in "sociological significance with Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation." Black teenager Julius Chambers, who would become his state's leading civil rights attorney in decades to come, celebrated the *Brown* decision with his teachers and schoolmates in rural North Carolina. Pauli Murray, a Durham activist, attorney, author, and religious leader, wrote to her friend that she had wept "unashamedly" upon hearing of *Brown*. For Murray and other African Americans, it meant, she said, "a climax of the long steep climb out of black slavery." For southern whites, the immediate impact of *Brown* was not as intense, but those in political positions or working in school systems certainly realized its potential and readied themselves for action. Upon hearing of the ruling, for instance,

Luther Hodges, North Carolina Lieutenant Governor, and thereby the head of the State Board of Education, at once left off his cross-country train trip to an important Rotary International meeting to return to the state.[1]

Over the next months, the broad scope of *Brown*'s mandate to eliminate Jim Crow laws that segregated schools by race would become clear. It would apply to 9 million white and 2.6 million black students in 17 states and Washington, D.C. Among them were the approximately fifteen thousand students attending schools in Rockingham County, North Carolina. The challenges facing the four separate school districts of Rockingham County—all operating dual systems for blacks and whites—show how complicated the situation was for thousands of similar Southern communities. Like other rural counties in the early 1950s, Rockingham County schools were already dealing with quite a bit of confusion—overlapping district lines, tangled or limited bus routes, and uncertain funding sources. Determining which students attended which schools was already in dispute at times, as attendance boundaries butted against other internal county units, neighboring counties, and the state of Virginia. School leaders' time was often

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1 "Segregation Ruled Illegal," *Greensboro* (NC) *Record*, May 17, 1954, 1; Tom P. Brady, *Black Monday*, quoted in James Graham Cook, *The Segregationists* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1962), 16, 13; "Tribunal Delays Order Enforcing School Decision," *Greensboro* (NC) *Record,* May 17, 1954, 1; James T. Patterson, Brown v. Board of Education*: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 70; Pauli Murray quoted in Pete Daniel, *Lost Revolutions: The South in the 1950s* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 180; Luther H. Hodges, *Businessman in the Statehouse: Six Years As Governor of North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1962), 79; "North Carolina," *Southern School News*, September 3, 1954, 10 (Nashville, TN: Southern Education Reporting Service), Digital edition on-line at Civil Rights Digital Library, Digital Library of Georgia, http://rdl.usg.edu. Cook includes a twenty-page chapter based on his interview of Tom Brady at the judge's home in Brookhaven, Mississippi, and characterizes Brady's *Black Monday* as the "first great rallying cry for southern segregationists." The State Board of Education, which Hodges headed as Lieutenant Governor, was made up of ten voting members, plus the state school superintendent and the state treasurer.

consumed in attempting to keep controversies in local communities under control and aging schools in good enough condition to house and provide good schooling conditions for the students in their charge. School officials no doubt had a multitude of questions about how to proceed. What would be the status of the newly built and improved black schools? Would these buildings be good enough to consider "separate but equal" and possibly keep blacks out of white schools? Who would actually make the policies regarding the implementation of *Brown*—the governor? state legislators? the courts? Congress? local superintendents and boards? Did school and community leaders really need to do anything at all about complying with the ruling?[2]

Overall, Rockingham County leaders looked to Raleigh for fundamental direction but reacted to the *Brown* mandate and the subsequent "with all deliberate speed" instruction during 1954-1956 in a variety of ways according to the community and its particular leadership. Across the large county, the response depended on the history of racial interaction, demographics, and the specific dynamics within each of the communities, as well as the different interests and perspectives of the school leadership. A few worked quietly to bring about positive change without creating turmoil in the community. Some demanded immediate compliance with the ruling. Still others swiftly made plans to actively resist any form of desegregation—in the schools or otherwise. In the actions and rhetoric of the segregationist Patriots of North Carolina active in the county, we can gain a deeper understanding of the broader debates about school

2 "Tribunal Delays Order Enforcing School Decision," *Greensboro* (NC) *Record,* May 17, 1954, 1; "Rockingham Improving Schools," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, August 31, 1952, 11.

desegregation, especially the significance of the Southern Manifesto and the role of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) during the Cold War amid widespread fears of Communist infiltration. Even though there were many who strongly identified with the moral core of the *Brown* decision and were more open to complying with its mandate to eliminate segregated schools, the strong resistance of segregationists was very effective in countering the voices of moderates such as those in the Council of Churches and other denominations in support of the *Brown* ruling. Most citizens, black and white, although concerned about what the *Brown* decision might mean for them, waited for their state and local leaders to respond and followed their lead. Ultimately, the combination of intense segregationist efforts of the Patriots organization and the maneuvers to maintain segregation made by state officials was effective in muting any potential for complying with *Brown* in Rockingham County.

White Resistance from State Political Leaders

Implementing *Brown* really did have to be "worked out locally," but the strongest of the responses that ultimately molded local plans was white resistance. There were pockets of acceptance of gradual change and some adjustments made after the decision was handed down, but there was also far more resistance to integration in Rockingham County than is generally remembered. This resistance came from both state political leaders and local citizens active in the segregationist movement. At the state level, it was clear early on that North Carolina would not integrate its schools without a mighty attempt at circumventing the mandate. White resistance to *Brown* came most definitively to Rockingham County, as it did in most other areas of the state, in the form of legal

maneuvers, legislation, and efforts of state officials to take what they called a middle road between outright defiance (and destructive massive resistance) on one hand and the unthinkable—compliance—on the other. No matter how "moderate" the image of North Carolina may have been, what resulted in the aftermath of *Brown* was strong and effective white resistance to desegregation, led by Governor Luther Hodges, influential industrialist and Rockingham County native. The leadership of Hodges, other state politicians, and their advisers in the mid-1950s was, in fact, a hard segregationist stance that emboldened white resistance and dismissed any calls from African Americans or their supporters to break down Jim Crow as "extremism."[3]

Many Rockingham County residents probably first learned about the May 17, 1954, *Brown* decision from an area evening newspaper, such as the *Reidsville Review* or the *Greensboro Record,* which reported that North Carolina Governor William Umstead was "terribly disappointed" in the news from the Supreme Court. Four states—South Carolina, Georgia, Louisiana and Mississippi—almost immediately promised defiance of the ruling. Some in North Carolina had a similar reaction. Allison James, a Greensboro businessman, offered a motion at the meeting of Fifth District Democrats ten days after *Brown* was announced, condemning the Supreme Court ruling as a "diabolical decision" and a "crucifixion of the South." After a "brief but fiery discussion," the motion was soundly rejected by the convention chaired by Lieutenant Governor Hodges of

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3 "This must be worked out locally," also used in the title of this dissertation, is a phrase taken from the handwritten notes of Rosa Parks at a workshop she attended at Highlander Folk School in Monteagle, Tennessee, July 27, 1955, four months before she refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus. See "Rosa Parks Notes, School Desegregation Workshop, Highlander Center, July 24-August 8, 1955," *Civil Rights Movement Veterans,* http://www.crmvet.org/docs/5507park.htm.

Leaksville. Not desiring hasty, open defiance of the nation's highest court, representatives from Rockingham County, including J. Hampton Price and P. W. Glidewell, urged respect for the decision as "the law of the land." Other North Carolina leaders, meeting the state's reputation for moderation, said they would study the decision and then recommend a path forward for the state's one hundred county units and seventy-two city school districts.[4]

On May 27, Governor Umstead released an official response to the case, crafted by his secretary Ed Rankin, which carefully placed the state in the cautious and waiting category, but with a thick strand of defiance woven into the statement. After reviewing the history of laws allowing segregated schools in North Carolina, Umstead firmly stated his own objection to the ruling, which he said was a clear invasion of states' rights. "However, the Supreme Court of the United States has spoken," he acknowledged. The state faced "complications and difficulties of immeasurable extent," but he did not believe the state needed to act right away. The Court "has recognized the difficulties which it has created," he told North Carolinians, and would give the affected states time to work out a plan. He indicated he would meet with other southern governors and consult with other state leaders to decide how to proceed. "This is no time for rash

4 "Umstead 'Terribly Disappointed' by Court's Decision," *Greensboro* (NC) *Record*, May 17, 1954, 1; Tom Eamon, *The Making of a Southern Democracy: North Carolina Politics from Kerr Scott to Pat McCrory* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 40; "Democrats of Fifth District Reject Condemnation of High Court Ruling on Segregation," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, May 27, 1954; "North Carolina," *Southern School News*, September 3, 1954, 10. Also see Letter from Allison James to All Charter Members, Patriots of North Carolina, Inc., September 28, 1955, Box 3, File 16, Wesley Critz George Papers, Southern Historical Collections, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (hereafter cited as George Papers, SHC). James would become one of the key leaders of the segregationist North Carolina Patriots organization.

statements or the proposal of impossible schemes," he advised. There would be no outright vocal defiance of the Court from the political leadership as in other southern states, and yet, the path North Carolina's leaders would make for the state was clear. Umstead and other state officials framed the situation as a crisis *created* by the Supreme Court, not as a social ill or fundamental problem of a society segregated by race that they needed to solve. Reflecting in 1960 on this crucial moment in the *Brown* era, Thomas J. Pearsall, the head of the committee which crafted the state's response, credited North Carolina's governors with maintaining the state's reputation for moderation, making it stand above the other southern states that hastily defied the Court. Instead of saying "they weren't going to have it," Pearsall said, Umstead and Hodges were "sensible and reasonable enough not to make those statements." The absence of such a defiant statement did not mean, however, that North Carolina's policies were any more amenable to complying with *Brown* than most of the rest of the South.[5]

School leaders of all four systems in Rockingham County spoke to their communities through the local papers just after *Brown* was announced. The chairman of

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5 "Statement by Umstead on Segregation Ruling," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, May 28, 1954, Section 3, 10; "Umstead Criticizes Segregation Ruling," *Wilmington* (NC) *Morning Star*, May 28, 1954, 21; Hodges, *Businessman in the Statehouse*, 80; Transcript of "Session on History of the Integration Situation in North Carolina," September 3, 1960, 57, Box 150, Folder 1774, Integration Situation in North Carolina, Luther Hartwell Hodges Papers, Southern Historical Collections, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (hereafter cited as Hodges Papers, SHC). In his review of laws affecting North Carolina schools, Umstead gave a defense of segregation based on the fact, he said, that North Carolinians had been assured they could retain separate schools when they ratified the Fourteenth Amendment. In his public statements, speeches, and memoir, Hodges often spoke about the ruling as the "problem created by the Supreme Court's decision" (*Businessman*, 80). The September 1960 document is a one hundred-page transcript of a private meeting of Governor Luther Hodges, Thomas J. Pearsall, and three other advisers just before leaving office. In their "discussion" of desegregation, they shared behind-the-scenes observations about motivations and outcomes regarding the state's response to *Brown*.

the Madison district, textile executive Dalton McMichael, stated that the "Madison Schools will work directly with State Board of Education" and that he anticipated no changes at all in the coming school year due to the Supreme Court decision. This sentiment was echoed by the County system superintendent, Allan Lewis, who commented that "the ruling will eventually make some changes," but that "the present plan" would be followed for the coming year. In Reidsville, the response was similar, but the Chairman C. C. McKinney indicated that the board had already discussed the situation in anticipation of the decision and would "work out the problems in a sane and fair manner." Similar to other school leaders in Rockingham County, Leaksville Township Superintendent John Hough only three days after the announcement of *Brown c*onfidently told readers of the *Leaksville News* that he anticipated no "radical deviation in the operation of our local schools" in response to the ruling. "We shall strive to solve every school problem with poise, dignity, intelligence and in the best interest of all our children and our community," he said. For good measure and no doubt because he was a Rockingham County native, Lieutenant Governor Hodges's statement was printed just below Hough's but was a bit more ambiguous. He asked North Carolinians to be "calm and unemotional about the banning of segregation in our schools" but acknowledged that the State Board of Education, which he chaired, had earlier discussed the possibility of such a ruling and "never came to any formal conclusions whatsoever on what we would do." Over the next months, however, Hodges would speak with more certainty and increasing firmness about proposals for dealing with the problem he regularly characterized as "created" by the Supreme Court decision. Local leaders indicated that

they would wait on the Court for further instruction and look to Raleigh for guidance, since, as officials of public schools, they were all supervised and financed mainly by the state.[6]

Certainly, Hodges, Governor Umstead, and other state officials faced challenging circumstances in 1954. During a very trying time for the region and for himself personally, the Governor was establishing policy and putting key people in place who would heavily influence the racial politics of coming decades. Umstead, still recovering from a heart attack he had only three days into his term, was dealing only five days before *Brown* with the death and replacement of Senator Clyde Hoey. In support of their native son, Democrats in Rockingham County met and endorsed Lieutenant Governor Hodges for the position. In a surprise move, however, Umstead chose Sam J. Ervin, then a member of the North Carolina Supreme Court, for the Senate seat, one Ervin would hold for the next two decades. During the 1950s, he would become known as a legal scholar focused on the effort to stop or significantly delay the implementation of *Brown*. Ervin was the second Senator from North Carolina that Umstead had chosen a replacement for in the few months he had been in office. He had already surprised pundits with his selection of Alton Lennon, a Wilmington attorney, to replace Willis Smith, who had died in June 1953. In the fall, the year became even more daunting for the Governor when Hurricane Hazel hit the state on October 15. Despite the many

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6 "No Early Change Seen in Local School Set-Up," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, May 20, 1954, 1; "Supreme Court Decision Accepted Here in Sober and Thoughtful Manner," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, May 18, 1954, 1; "Supt. Hough Sees No Problems From Supreme Court Action on Segregation That Cannot Be Met" and "Lt. Gov. Hodges Hopes People Will Be Calm," *Leaksville* (NC) *News,* May 20, 1954, 1; Hodges, *Businessman in the Statehouse*, 80.

political challenges and his poor health, Umstead was, by most accounts, very careful about details and focused on governing effectively.[7]

In none of these crises, however, did Umstead call on his Lieutenant Governor, Luther Hodges, for his input. In fact, the two had a very chilly relationship. In August Umstead had put in place a nineteen-member study committee chaired by Rocky Mount businessman Thomas Pearsall to evaluate what the *Brown* ruling meant for North Carolina but did not consult Hodges on the make-up of this committee or any other policy for that matter. Hodges wrote in his memoir, *Businessman in the Statehouse*, that Umstead had little to say to him on the subject of school segregation, "other than that he was thinking about the subject." So, when Hodges learned that Governor Umstead had died unexpectedly, the Leaksville industrialist so new to politics had to step into a role for which he had little or no experience. His home county constituency, however, was enthusiastic and confident in his potential. "The Tri-Cities [Leaksville, Spray, Draper] are proud to have Luther H. Hodges as chief executive of North Carolina," the hometown paper reported, "and feel that he will conduct the office in a businesslike manner and make one of the best governors our state has ever had." At his home in Leaksville on Sunday morning, November 7, 1954, when Umstead died, Hodges went on to worship services at his home church, Leaksville Methodist. The paper ran a separate article making clear the "solemn" tone of the Hodges home, with a very personal description given by Mrs. Hodges that her husband "broke down and cried" at the news and the

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7 "McMichael Re-Elected Executive Chairman of County's Democrats," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, May 17, 1954, 1; Eamon, *The Making of a Southern Democracy*, 42, 39, 44.

realization of the "burdens he will now have to bear." Further, the names of all local people who attended the governor's inauguration were listed, among them textile executives and bosses and the superintendent of the local schools, longtime Hodges associate, John Hough. The home area of Rockingham County was deeply invested in the success of the new governor and would be especially connected, many quite personally, to his leadership. The newspaper in Madison, on the western side of the county, confirmed in announcing the new governor's taking the oath of office: "Hodges has many warm personal friends in Madison where he is well known. During his many years as manager of the Fieldcrest Mills his various civic activities frequently brought him to the community."[8]

Back in Raleigh, Hodges got to work on pressing matters and wisely kept all of the former governor's staff. He also inherited the Governor's Advisory Committee on Education, called the Pearsall Committee. Hodges had run for the office of Lieutenant Governor in 1952, offering himself as a non-politician and a successful businessman who could apply the same effective practices to government. At a time when the area's mills were booming, citizens in his home county of Rockingham could have strongly supported his record of leadership as a textile executive, as he had risen through the ranks at

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8 Rob Christensen, *The Paradox of Tar Heel Politics: The Personalities, Elections, and Events That Shaped Modern North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 162; Hodges, *Businessman in the Statehouse,* 80; "Citizenry Speak Highly of Gov. Hodges," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, November 11, 1954, 1; "Hodges Goes to Church after News of Death," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, November 11, 1954, 1; "Family and Townspeople See Ceremony," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, November 11, 1954, 1; "Rockingham Man Sworn in as Governor of State, *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, November 11, 1954, 1. Three of the nineteen members of the Advisory Committee were black, all state employees. Christensen notes, however, that Umstead was the only southern governor to name any African Americans to such study committees.

Marshall Field, from local personnel manager to corporate president. In political office, he was primarily interested in raising the incomes of North Carolinians and recruiting new businesses to the state, and during his six years as governor, he was able to accomplish many of his goals in this regard. However, much more of his time had to be spent dealing with racial issues and school desegregation than he desired. Like millions of other white Southerners, Hodges would have preferred to maintain segregation and continue what he saw as the "outstanding record of good race relationships here in North Carolina." Hodges reflected the view that historian Jason Sokol argues was dominant in the aftermath of *Brown*: "Whites hoped their lives could remain untouched." Having to deal with the racial crisis especially hampered Hodges's greater goals of business recruitment and economic progress. As a result, he worked to "manage" the desegregation situation, as he was inclined to do as a longtime businessman—to promote appearances that the state was a calm, progressive place where it was safe and even desirable to conduct business. This management perspective, his own racial experiences as an elite who received deference especially from blacks but also from whites, and his perceptions of the political climate drove his policies.[9]

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9 Christensen, *The Paradox of Tar Heel Politics,* 157; Luther H. Hodges, "The Segregation Problem in the Public Schools of North Carolina: Summary of Statements and Actions by Governor Luther H. Hodges," Pamphlet, March 26, 1956, 6, Box 148, Folder 1753, Education: Integration, Hodges Papers, SHC; Jason Sokol, *There Goes My Everything: White Southerners in the Age of Civil Rights, 1945-1975* (New York: Random House, Inc., 2006), 48. At the height of his career, Hodges oversaw twenty-nine mills in six states and three countries. For evidence of building business and commerce in North Carolina under Hodges, see Eamon, *The Making of a Southern Democracy*, 53-54, and Christensen, *The Paradox of Tar Heel Politics*, 160. Hodges also claims much progress in these areas in his memoir, *Businessman in the Statehouse.* See Chapters 2, 3, and 9.

From 1954 on, what guidance on responding to the *Brown* decision that came from Hodges and other North Carolina political leaders was clearly supportive of continued segregation. In an attempt to delay and possibly negate the court's mandate to desegregate, I. Beverly Lake, Assistant Attorney General, presented North Carolina's arguments before the Supreme Court in the second phase of *Brown*. Many of his comments echoed the sentiments of vocal contemporary segregationists. Two races "as fundamentally different as the Anglo-Saxon and the Negro" could not be mixed in classrooms or on school buses, as they would have to be in a rural state such as North Carolina, without dire consequences, Lake told the court. With evidence derived primarily from 165 surveys submitted by school superintendents, Lake argued that conflicts and "racial bitterness" would be the result of forced desegregation and "public schools may be abolished." When the Governor's Advisory Committee offered its recommendations, the General Assembly, in counsel with Hodges, took another step toward resisting *Brown* and circumventing desegregation with the Pupil Assignment Act. This March 1955 legislation, which was based on an Alabama bill and eliminated the word "race" from each school-related statute, gave local school boards final authority in designating which school every student in their district would attend, thus preventing a suit being brought against the state to challenge segregation policies directly. This decentralization of authority made it necessary for each student and his or her family to request transfers, and then, if turned down, file grievances with one of the 172 local boards in North Carolina, effectively stalling the desegregation process. Hodges revealed in his memoir that the purpose of North Carolina's maneuvers from the beginning was to

stop schools from integrating and to maintain a society segregated by race. He wrote, "The official policy of North Carolina was against integration of the races in the public schools, but it had no means of preventing integration other than the Pupil Assignment Act." Several historians have noted that this plan was, in fact, the most effective of all the measures to thwart desegregation enacted in this era. By 1958, every state in the South had followed North Carolina in utilizing this strategy.[10]

Citizens in the governor's home county continued to have personal contact with Hodges, as he traveled home and spoke to local clubs, community events, and political gatherings. His work in Raleigh was covered weekly in the local paper, and in the aftermath of *Brown*, many Rockingham County residents were paying close attention to his arguments concerning segregation. One was Mrs. W. M. Jumper of Leaksville. "He might know politics," she wrote to the editor of the *Greensboro Daily News*, "but he doesn't know the N. C. Negro." She was responding to the statewide speech the governor had made a week earlier on August 8, 1955, to call for his plan of "voluntary segregation." Carried on sixty radio and ten television stations (all the broadcast media outlets in the state), Hodges had mispronounced "Negro" as "Nigra," an insult to her, she said, that "made my heart hurt." This repeated mispronunciation throughout the address disrespected her and other African Americans so much that it made her fear that North

10 "North Carolina," *Southern School News*, December 1, 1954, 11; John E. Batchelor, *Race and Education in North Carolina: From Segregation to Desegregation* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Press, 2015), 49; "Session on History of the Integration Situation in North Carolina," September 3, 1960, 22, Hodges Papers, SHC; Hodges, *Businessman in the Statehouse*, 87. On pupil assignment plan, see, for example, James T. Patterson, Brown v. Board of Education*: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 100; and Michael J. Klarman, Brown v. Board *and the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 95.

Carolina might follow other states by "using different kinds of schemes to keep Negroes from joining the NAACP, and to keep them from the polls." Previously, she had thought that she could call on the "Christian people of this great state" and had believed that the governor, whom she knew to be a layman in the Methodist church in their hometown of Leaksville, would act out of "Christian integrity" and not do "such an obnoxious thing," but now, after his speech and this particular affront, which she called a "disgrace," she would not be "surprised at anything he said or did."[11]

Jumper was not alone in her criticisms. Head of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Roy Wilkins said that Hodges's "voluntary segregation" idea amounted to asking black citizens to "give up their constitutional rights" and to "continue to live under a Jim Crow system imposed by his state." Perhaps the most profound criticism came from Hodges's friend and former classmate at the University of North Carolina, playwright Paul Green. In a very personal note, Green wrote that even though he was sure the Governor would receive praise from most North Carolinians for the program he advocated, he was "saddened and surprised" by the

11 For examples of contact with the local community, see *Leaksville* (NC) *News,* May 19, 1955, 1; September 1, 1955; May 17, 1956, 1; and May 31, 1956; "Town Talk," *Leaksville* (NC) *News,* July 5, 1956, 1; and "Young Democrats Map Plans for Hodges Rally," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News,* January 13, 1956, 4; Luther H. Hodges, "Address on Statewide Radio-Television Network, August 8, 1955," in *Messages, Addresses, and Public Papers of Luther Hartwell Hodges, Governor of North Carolina, 1954-1961*, vol. 1, ed. James W. Patton (Raleigh: Council of State of North Carolina, 1960), 199, 494, 505; Mrs. W. M. Jumper, "Pronouncing 'Negro,'" Public Pulse, *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, August 15, 1955, 4. Governor Hodges donated a $245 prize he had won on a New York City television program to "his favorite charity"—"his home town church." Not surprisingly, some note of the governor's work in Raleigh appeared nearly every week in his hometown paper, often along with a large photograph.

speech. The "challenging directive of the U. S. Supreme Court is a tough one," he said, "but truth still remains the truth, right still the right, justice still remains justice."[12]

Governor Hodges was, indeed, bewildered by the immediate and scathing criticism about his speech. He contended in his public statements that he was shielding the state from the more militant forces in the legislature, which had already proposed removing all state funding from school systems that integrated. In his memoir, he wrote that he truly did fear the abandonment of the schools. Hodges, however, had little understanding of the concerns of Negro citizens. One historian has noted that his experiences in interacting with African Americans were largely in the "extremely segregated spaces" of Rockingham County textile mills and that he likely saw segregation as "mutually beneficial," a way of running the mills efficiently. As a member of management in a southern mill town, he was also accustomed to deference from all employees, particularly blacks. He failed to realize, however, that his speech had truly been offensive. In his use of "Nigra," he had referred to about a fourth of North Carolina's people using the language of Old South plantation paternalism. Further, in his speech outlining his "voluntary segregation" plan and the implementation of the Pupil Assignment Law, he had placed the onus of the future status of the state's public schools almost entirely on black citizens. If whites abandoned the public schools because of race-mixing, he said, it would be the fault of Negroes themselves, who were the dupes of the "selfish and militant" NAACP. He also failed to realize the profound insults he had

12 "N.C. Governor Asks Voluntary Segregation: NAACP Balks," *Southern School News*, September 1955, 14.

leveled at African Americans by blaming them for "'show-off' actions." "Only the person who feels he is inferior must resort to demonstrations to prove he is not," Hodges said. After speaking directly to Negro citizens, Hodges returned to addressing the "people of North Carolina," by which he seemed to mean the white majority. He assured them that "no court has told us or will tell us that we must mix races in schools." He urged calm. "Let each local school group have its study committee to analyze its own conditions and problems," he suggested, and in the end, keep "our basic traditions intact." Back home, the Leaksville School Board was in harmony with Hodges on racial matters, having just announced their local study committee with vocal segregationist Dallas Gwynn as chair. Just as instructed by Governor Hodges, the Reidsville School Board, where another segregationist active in the resistance movement, Paul Hastings, was a member, would also name such a study committee in an upcoming meeting.[13]

Continuing to make his case for voluntary segregation, Hodges made few inroads with black citizens despite two speeches before black audiences in 1955, the only two during his first term. Just three weeks after his statewide radio address, the Governor spoke to about one hundred African American teachers meeting at Shaw University in Raleigh, arguing for school choice as a key element of his plan. If there were only one

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13 Eamon, *The Making of a Southern Democracy,* 46; Hodges, *Businessman in the Statehouse*, 86, 87, 93; Anders Walker, *The Ghost of Jim Crow: How Southern Moderates Used* Brown v. Board of Education *To Stall Civil Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 52; Hodges, "Address on Statewide Radio-Television Network, August 8, 1955," in *Messages, Addresses, and Public Papers*, vol. 1, 210, 207, 208, 213, 214; "School Advisory Committee Named," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, November 6, 1955, 38; Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, August 30, 1955; Minutes of Reidsville City Schools, November 21, 1955. The Rockingham County board also responded to what they called the Pearsall Committee's request that an advisory board be appointed, but the Madison school leaders did not. It was at this point that they, instead, requested that a black member be appointed to their school board. See Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, September 19, 1955 and Minutes of Madison City Schools, October 3, 1955.

system for both races, then neither would have a choice as to where to attend, he asserted. And if there were no schools at all available because they were closed by local boards that refused to desegregate, then "nobody could have any choice," he reminded them. He asked them to accept his gradual, "step by step" approach. "You cannot upset the daily habits and deeply ingrained thinking of an entire section of the country in one fell swoop," he said. He reflected later, "Well, I don't know when I have had such a blank audience. Ordinarily I had been well received by these Negro groups."[14]

At North Carolina A&T's 1955 Founder's Day program three months later, Hodges received what he considered a very insulting response from the overflow crowd of students, faculty, and townspeople. It was "the most miserable and terrible experience that we have ever had in connection with a speech," he wrote. In his 1962 memoir, Hodges described the incident. An "obviously unfriendly" crowd failed to stand when the Governor entered, jointly uttered a "discourteous snicker, highly audible," and then perhaps half of them shuffled their feet so loudly that he had to stop his speech. He recalled that he turned to the college president, F. D. Bluford, and asked if he should continue, only to hear, "Suit yourself." Hodges was "stunned and disappointed" that President Bluford did not do something to stop these interruptions. Although he wrote, "I hold no resentment," because of the "stress and strain of those days," Hodges clearly did feel bitter that such "a discourteous thing" was done to him. He wrote very terse identical replies to each of the apologies he received after the incident (and there were

14 Luther H. Hodges, "Address Before the North Carolina Teachers Association, August 26, 1955," in *Messages, Addresses, and Public Papers*, vol. 1, 219, 220; "Session on History of the Integration Situation in North Carolina," September 3, 1960, 44, Hodges Papers, SHC.

many), acknowledging only that he had received the communication. He blamed the response on a "premeditated" tactic of opponents to his voluntary segregation plan, people who did not "accurately represent North Carolina's Negro citizenry." Students told reporters that they were reacting to the way the Governor mispronounced "Negro" as "Nigra," just as he had in the earlier broadcast speech. Others speculated that the crowd was responding to the fact that the majority of the college trustees were white and that they thought President Bluford and other college leadership were being too accommodating to the governor's plans. In any case, Hodges continued in what he considered his middle way—between what he called a "verbal battle of the extremes," with state Assistant Attorney General I. Beverly Lake and other segregationists on one hand calling for schools to be closed rather than comply with the Supreme Court ruling and the NAACP on the other hand calling for full integration and the firing of Lake. "I was besieged from both sides," he lamented in his memoir.[15]

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15 "Session on History of the Integration Situation in North Carolina," September 3, 1960, 44, Hodges Papers, SHC; Hodges, *Businessman in the Statehouse,* 90, 91, 86, 87; Luther H. Hodges, "Address at the Founders' Day Program of the Agricultural and Technical College of North Carolina, Greensboro, N.C., November 4, 1955," in *Messages, Addresses, and Public Papers*, vol. 1, 250; Mrs. James B. La Mar, "Breach of Etiquette," Public Pulse, *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, November 8, 1955, 8. In his memoir, Hodges denied that he had "knowingly mispronounce[d] the word" (91). Mrs. La Mar, a member of the Leaksville school board, also defended the governor's speech. "In 23 years of rearing a family and hiring maids," she wrote, "I have yet to meet one who accepts the correct name of the race": Negro. In her experience, the preferred the term was "colored." "Had the Governor used 'colored,'" she asked, "would there have been an incident?" A white Southern contemporary who took a role in the desegregation of the University of Virginia explained that she, also, was misjudged by her pronunciation of this word. "I hope someday to convince a few people that the white Southerner's pronunciation of this word is not an index to his attitude toward Negroes," she argued. Southerners just tended to use many "uh" sounds in their speech. See Sarah Patton Boyle, *The Desegregated Heart: A Virginian's Stand in Time of Transition* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1962), 109. Hodges's tone-deafness to the objection about white trustees for black colleges might be seen in his appointments to the Winston-Salem State Teachers College Board of Trustees in September 1957. Of the twelve appointees, most were white, among them Hodges's hometown associate, John Hough, Superintendent of the Leaksville Township Schools. See "Morgan Gets ABC Board Position," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, September 5, 1957, 15. Regarding criticisms of Bluford as an

Two years into the desegregation crisis as he prepared to run for a full term as the state's leader, Hodges wanted to make sure that North Carolinians were "fully informed as to what their Governor has said and done" concerning racial segregation. To make his views clear, he printed at his own expense a pamphlet chronologically outlining his policies, the sum of which do not express the moderate views that the Governor often said he represented, but rather a pro-segregation stance. Elsewhere he had stated his purpose "to lead as best I can the state in a moderate fashion." Yet, this collection of policy statements, coming as it did in March 1956 as Hodges was running for reelection, appears to have had political importance primarily in appealing to segregationists more than in avoiding the extremes. The Governor "has borne the major share of the responsibility for leading North Carolina through the crisis created by the Supreme Court's decision," according to the pamphlet's introductory note. Twice in the nine pages of text Hodges stated that he urged the General Assembly to support the resolution of the Special Advisory Committee that "the mixing of the races in the public schools within the state cannot be accomplished and, if attempted, would alienate support of the schools to such an extent that they could not be operated successfully." He spent more than one page of the pamphlet attacking the NAACP as extremists, saying that he was "amazed" at the "effrontery" of the group and that he would not "be forced around" by their demands. He made no mention of extremists on the other end of the spectrum, however,

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"accommodationist," see William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 59. Historian Chafe recounts that Bluford, on his deathbed, only a month after Hodges's speech, is said to have uttered his last words, "They called me an Uncle Tom. They called me an Uncle Tom."

segregationist groups in the state such as the Patriots of North Carolina. In fact, he closely reflected their views.[16]

The pamphlet had two references to Hodges's hometown of Leaksville, suggesting that its distribution may have been centered in his home area of Rockingham County. He referred to announcing his candidacy for election in 1956 in Leaksville and quoted from that speech:

> Those of you in my home community know me well enough to realize that I usually say what I believe and think . . . Let me again make my position clear. I do not agree with the Supreme Court decision and I think it usurped the right of the States and the Congress in its decision. I do not favor mixing the races in the schools and I believe the vast majority of white and colored citizens feel the same as I do.

He expressed support for the forthcoming elements of the Pearsall Plan that would ensure that "no child would have to attend a mixed school." The pamphlet concluded with an endorsement of the Southern Manifesto, a statement signed by 101 members of the United States Congress condemning the Supreme Court's *Brown* decision as "usurpation of power." Coming as it did just days after this document was signed, Hodges's statement was timed at a moment when he may have been feeling pressure from segregationists such as the Patriots of North Carolina. The group's vice-president, who lived in Leaksville and attended the same church as Hodges, had just led a rally of seven hundred people in Rockingham County's seat of Wentworth, where the speaker was segregationist I. Beverly Lake and at which the area's congressman, Representative

16 Hodges, *Businessman in the Statehouse*, 97; Hodges, "The Segregation Problem in the Public Schools of North Carolina," 3-7, Hodges Papers, SHC.

Thurmond Chatham, had been bitterly attacked for his refusal to sign the Southern Manifesto, a condemnation of the Supreme Court's *Brown* decision. The group was out to destroy Chatham's political career because he was seen as soft on the segregation issue. Hodges would surely have wanted to avoid such a public confrontation or similar accusations, especially in his home county. In his policy pamphlet, he wrote, "The Manifesto is a good thing; it is in agreement with the spirit and language of what we have been talking about in North Carolina."[17]

Ultimately, the way forward for North Carolina came from Hodges's support of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Education, better known as the Pearsall Committee, and his call for a special legislative session to consider their proposals. Whereas the first board appointed by Governor Umstead had had three Negroes among its nineteen members, two presidents of black colleges and a black agricultural extension agent, the new committee was whittled down to seven and had no representation from the state's African Americans. Hodges was very concerned, however, with having white geographical representation from all three areas of the state—Eastern, Piedmont, and Western sections—much more than with biracial balance. Although the original three black members had been "high grade" persons, according to Hodges, the reason for having no blacks serve on the second committee, he explained publicly, was to prevent them from being subjected to too much pressure. However, Hodges and his associates

17 "Dr. Lake Addresses Patriots," *Greensboro* (NC) *Record*, March 26, 1956, 12; Hodges, "The Segregation Problem in the Public Schools of North Carolina," 10, 11, Hodges Papers, SHC. The information on the rally of seven hundred appeared in the newspaper with a large photo of leaders of the Patriots organization on the stage along with Lake: Allison James of Greensboro, Patriots executive secretary; Dallas E. Gwynn; Carl Weatherly; and J. T. Chandler of Leaksville; Paul Hastings of Reidsville; Emerson Manuel of Draper; and Robert B. Stone, mayor of Stoneville.

revealed in a 1960 "discussion" just before leaving office that the racial make-up of the second committee—all seven white men and mainly lawyers—was, in fact, because they were unable to find blacks who would bend to their views. Those potential black representatives with whom they met "were insisting upon immediate integration, that their rights had been declared by the Court and they were going to have them," Pearsall recalled. His group, whom one historian has called "North Carolina's committee to evade *Brown*," went on "without their [African Americans'] cooperation" to craft two remarkably segregationist amendments to the state constitution. If passed by a vote of the citizens, the amendments would authorize tuition vouchers for private school attendance if the race-mixing situation became intolerable and allow communities to close their schools altogether rather than integrate. Its recommendations, the committee explained, had one express goal, "that no child in North Carolina will be forced to attend a school with a child of another race," and was deemed a "sensible and acceptable plan" by Governor Hodges. Passed with only two dissenting votes in the General Assembly, the plan was promoted as the only way to "Save Our Schools," although it provided legal means to shut them down. A mere 15 percent of voters in a community could initiate a vote on whether to exercise the "local option" and close schools.[18]

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18 Batchelor, *Race and Education in North Carolina,* 42; Hodges, *Businessman in the Statehouse*, 83, 97, 101; "Session on History of the Integration Situation in North Carolina," September 3, 1960, 72, Hodges Papers, SHC; Walker, *The Ghost of Jim Crow*, 53; Eamon, *The Making of a Southern Democracy*, 46, 48; North Carolina Advisory Committee on Education, "The Pearsall Plan To Save Our Schools" (Raleigh: North Carolina Advisory Committee on Education, 1956), 1, 4; *Civil Rights Greensboro*, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, http://libcdm1.uncg.edu/cdm/ref/collection/CivilRights/id/533. This pamphlet in a Question and Answer format was widely distributed by the committee to explain how the Pearsall Plan would work if approved by voters in the September 1956 special election.

When the plan was considered by the state legislature and two amendments to the North Carolina Constitution proposed for a statewide vote, a number of critics and supporters spoke before lawmakers. James Dees, Episcopal minister from Statesville, and Leaksville's Dallas Gwynn, both representing the segregationist Patriots of North Carolina, spoke in support of the Pearsall Plan in hearings before the General Assembly. Their "hearty approval" of the amendments, however, was centered on the assumption that no local boards would "start partial integration in the fall," as had been rumored. Others, including the North Carolina Council of Churches, the North Carolina Parent-Teacher Association, black leaders, ministerial associations, and constitutional law experts, opposed the amendments to the North Carolina Constitution. Proponents prevailed, and since the situation was so urgent, they maintained, North Carolina's citizens would need a special election in September, only two months before the General Election. In their explanatory materials, widely circulated and reprinted in newspapers across the state, the Pearsall Committee assured voters, "Again, we are not attempting to defy the Court. We are law-abiding, decent people." Patriot leader Gwynn, however, interpreted an accompanying resolution of the committee differently. "Although Chairman [Thomas] Pearsall did not mention the doctrine of interposition," Gwynn told legislators, "I am sure that is what he had in mind."[19]

The Pearsall Plan was interpreted in various ways by North Carolina citizens. In Rockingham County, the *Leaksville News* predicted a light voter turnout for what editors

19 "Officials Back Group's Report," *Greensboro* (NC) *Record,* April 6, 1956, 4; "Hearings To Begin on School Bills," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, July 24, 1956, 2; North Carolina Advisory Committee on Education, "The Pearsall Plan To Save Our Schools," 4, Internet Archive, https://archive.org/details/pearsallplantosa00nort; "Pearsall Plan," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, August 23, 1956.

framed as a vote on whether to "endorse two years of planning by state leaders or wipe the slate clean for a fresh start." The county's representative in the state house urged area citizens to vote for the Pearsall Plan because it offered a "flexible legal framework in which the Supreme Court is less likely to overrule." If approved, he said, voters would "be telling outsiders to stay out of our internal affairs." Five local school leaders—principals, a supervisor, and Leaksville Superintendent John Hough—also endorsed the Pearsall Plan as a means of saving public schools. Few could argue with their goal that "public schools of North Carolina must be preserved." Unlike most of the editors across the state, the three newspapers in the county did not carry endorsements of the Pearsall Plan, however. Russell and Mimi Spear, editors of *The Messenger* in Madison, merely stated that the plan was endorsed by state leaders as a "safety valve" and then went on to present a long list of criticisms of the plan. Voters were "faced with a real problem," they wrote. Interestingly, the editors of the governor's hometown paper in Leaksville chose to reprint the editorial of the *Winston-Salem Journal,* which had advised readers to vote against the plan. "North Carolina is not at its best in the Pearsall Plan," the editorial read, and it would poison the future of race relations in the state with "threats and deceptive tuition offers." None of the local editors was bold enough to write forcefully in opposition to the proposed amendments, but clearly, they had some reservations. Framed as a stark choice between losing the public schools or voting for the Pearsall Plan, however, the proposals were overwhelmingly approved in all one hundred counties. Rockingham County was fairly typical of the statewide vote with a margin of six to one in favor of the amendments maintaining segregation. In only three of twenty-five

precincts in the county was the vote substantially closer; Madison and Leaksville voted four to one for the changes and one Reidsville precinct had the largest percentage voting against, at 34 percent. In addition to the vote tallies, one local newspaper ran a photo of Governor Hodges arriving at the Tri-Cities airport in a small private plane to cast his vote. He had flown home to vote in his precinct of Spray, to visit the Leaksville and Draper voting places, and had then gone right back to Raleigh. Hodges made his presence felt in Rockingham County, urging voters to endorse continued segregation.[20]

Historian Charles Bolton has noted that a very similar school amendment allowing closure of schools rather than integration was passed two to one by Mississippi voters in December 1954. Neither that amendment nor those in North Carolina were ever utilized to close public schools. What was considered extreme action by one electorate, however, was seen as "moderate" by another. Historian William Chafe has rightly concluded that Hodges offered only continued segregation as North Carolina's response to *Brown* and has asserted that the Governor went much further in framing the debate as a binary choice than he needed to. In his public statements, Hodges did, in fact, consistently maintain that segregation was the only option for North Carolinians, the only other alternatives being violence or the closing of the public schools altogether because

20 "Light Vote Feared Saturday; School Amendment at Stake," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, September 6, 1956, 1; "Rep. Radford Powell Describes Merits of Pearsall School Plan," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, September 6, 1956, 1; "Five School Men Approve Pearsall Plan," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, September 6, 1956, 1; "Interest Shown in September 8 Election," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, August 30, 1956; "Most Vital Election," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, September 6, 1956; "Pearsall Defeat Would Serve State Best," *Winston-Salem* (NC) *Journal* editorial of September 5, 1956, reprinted in *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, September 6, 1956, 2; Batchelor, *Race and Education in North Carolina,* 63; "Voters Approve Pearsall Plan and Constitutional Amendments," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, September 13, 1956, 1. The statewide margin was more than four to one in favor of the Pearsall Plan.

of "race-mixing." In these statements, Hodges often employed paternalistic language and even echoed the very rhetoric of the white supremacists. Chafe convincingly argues that Hodges's leadership came from "political expediency and his own racial views" rather than "a mass demand for more extreme action." Nevertheless, his leadership was widely considered moderate and practical. As a Rockingham County editor wrote in 1956, "Gov. Hodges usually works for and gets what he wants and believes is the best thing for his state." This reputation even made him a possible choice for Vice-President at the 1956 Democratic Convention and assured his election to a full term as governor in November. As would be expected, Democrat Hodges carried his home county of Rockingham by a vote of two to one, but the county supported Republican Dwight Eisenhower in the Presidential election by a small margin. Locals had given Hodges "a big vote of confidence," the *Leaksville News* boasted, "demonstrating that the people think he is doing a magnificent job." Another column in the hometown newspaper crowed of Hodges, "Now he is one of the bellwethers of the boys from Dixie. His judgment and decisions carry weight—and he is recognized as one of the leaders of the South." As such, he led his home county and the entire state to resist the mandate of *Brown* and maintain their system of racial segregation.[21]

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21 Charles C. Bolton, "The Last Holdout: Mississippi and the *Brown* Decision," in *With All Deliberate Speed: Implementing* Brown v. Board of Education, eds. Brian J. Daugherity and Charles C. Bolton (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2008), 128; Walker, *The Ghost of Jim Crow,* 49. On Hodges's argument that segregation was the only option for North Carolina, see, for example, "Address Before the North Carolina Teachers' Association," Shaw University, Raleigh, NC, August 26, 1955, and "Address Before Durham United Political Education Council," Durham, NC, March 27, 1956, in *Messages, Addresses, and Public Papers of Luther Hartwell Hodges, Governor of North Carolina, 1954-1961,* vol. 1, 220, 306; Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights,* 59; Mimi Spear, "No Time for Indifference," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, July 19, 1956; "Hodges Appears To Be in No Hurry To Stop Rumors," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, July 12, 1956, 1; "How They Voted," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, November 8, 1956, 1; "Hodges Given Big Vote of Confidence," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, May 31, 1956,

White Resistance from the Patriots of North Carolina

In addition to the resistance coming from the state political leadership, there was a significant white opposition effort to *Brown* waged in Rockingham County, led by school board members Dallas (Dal) E. Gwynn and Paul D. Hastings, who became active in the segregationist movement, the Patriots of North Carolina. These local men from Leaksville and Reidsville, the largest towns in the county, were extremely concerned about stopping racial integration in the schools and had deeply held views against what they saw as the greatest danger—race-mixing.

Starting in May 1954 and continuing at least for the next five years, Leaksville businessman Gwynn was remarkably busy in this cause, employing several paths in active resistance to *Brown.* One of his first strategies was to speak boldly, disperse his ideas throughout the region's newspapers, and to "educate" the public about the evils of race amalgamation that he believed would result from desegregation. Upon learning of the *Brown* decision, Gwynn, the secretary-treasurer of a company that operated several drive-in theaters in the Piedmont of North Carolina, set out almost immediately on a letter-writing campaign against race-mixing in the schools. During the weeks following the May 17 *Brown* announcement that schools segregated by race were inherently unequal, Gwynn had "more than fifty letters in the newspapers throughout the South." Dallas Gwynn was, indeed, a prolific writer on behalf of segregation, hitting nearly every

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2; and Kidd Brewer, "Gov. Hodges Has Moved All the Way to Political Top in Four Short Years," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, August 16, 1956, 2. On Hodges's "moderate" stance, Walker notes that Hodges, only a month into his term, wrote the Mississippi governor in December 1954, asking for information and requesting: "Let me know how you are coming along with your segregation. I know you have made some progress on the so-called 'Mississippi, or Assignment Plan.'"

theme of *Brown* opposition and representing virtually every main argument of segregationists. In his many letters to the editor of the *Greensboro Daily News*, he was confrontational in making the case time after time against race-mixing in schools. Gwynn's first letter to appear in the Public Pulse section of the paper was primarily to complain about the newspaper's "left-wing attitude." It had "purposely" failed to cover the "true public opinion of our people," he wrote, and had shown that it was for integration in the schools and the "eventual intermarriage of the races." At this point, his might be "one lone voice crying in the wilderness," but he predicted that millions would join him. They would judge the newspaper and Greensboro leaders, who seemed open to complying with the *Brown* ruling, to be on the wrong side of history. He predicted that the "city's name will live in infamy in the minds of Southern generations to come," because, as Gwynn claimed, the "South is composed almost in its entirety" of the "Anglo-Saxon race."[22]

In subsequent letters, the Leaksville businessman spoke bluntly about his views of the NAACP. As he saw it, it was behind the Court decision and was "fanatical." Its "true purpose," he wrote, was "amalgamation" and intermarriage so that Negroes could "lose their racial identity." Proof of this, he said, was that black soldiers serving in Europe in World War II "passed themselves off . . . as 'American Indians.'" Gwynn had some firsthand acquaintance with the experiences of American GIs in Europe, having served there for two years. He claimed to know of the motivation of Negro soldiers he served

22 Dallas E. Gwynn to Wesley Critz George, November 19, 1954, Box 2, Folder 10, George Papers, SHC; D. E. Gwynn, "Of Lost Liberties," Public Pulse, *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, June 4, 1954, 8.

alongside, asserting that they claimed Indian ancestry only "because their leaders had taught them to be ashamed of their own race." Once again, Gwynn had a dire prediction. Through amalgamation, Negroes would become a "lost race of half-breeds and mulattoes," despised by both blacks and whites. He found useful in his argument the misinterpretation of the Reconstruction era so reinforced in the mind of Southerners of his time—Negroes had been "misled and beguiled" by "Northern Carpetbaggers, Southern scalawags, and the crooked politicians" and then abandoned. Freedmen had to go back to the plantations to work and "finally ended up back at their former residence with their former Southern white owner, . . . their only true friend." They were being duped again by Northern agitators (the NAACP).[23]

Gwynn's letters were full-throated narratives of the Lost Cause so essential to white supremacists' worldview. In two of the letters, he contended that it was the "well-bred" whites of the South who were resisting the Court's ruling. Those who argued that Negroes had been mistreated in the South, he said, had just been taught "history from the Northern viewpoint." According to Gwynn, *Brown* was an invasion of the South by the federal government just as in 1865-1877 and "was the most stupid, untimely, asinine thing . . . the federal government has perpetrated since the Reconstruction period." The ruling, he asserted, was meant to "humiliate and destroy the South." "The Reconstruction Period was the most disgraceful epoch in American history," except perhaps for the current one, Gwynn wrote. Ultimately, Gwynn argued that the most serious result of the

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23 "'Dal' Gwynn Announces for School Board," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, August 26, 1954, 1; D. E. Gwynn, "Toward Amalgamation?," Public Pulse, *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, August 1, 1954, 59.

Brown case would be that Communists would use this vehicle of school desegregation to bring about race-mixing and their takeover of the United States. The decision had "created anxiety, trouble, and disturbance": "one of the objectives of Communists." Therefore, NAACP members who supported the decision were Communist sympathizers. Americans should just wake up, he urged, and "quit trying to live in a make-believe world in which every person is created equal." This debate about the NAACP and Communism would be ongoing as a central element of the segregationist manifesto.[24]

Gwynn did get some pushback from other readers, however. One writer from South Carolina disagreed with Gwynn about his claim that history from a Yankee viewpoint was being taught to Southerners. That had not been his experience, and he argued for a "little more Americanism and less sectionalism." A stinging response to Gwynn's letters came from fellow Rockingham County resident, Maggie Mayes Vaughn of Reidsville. Gwynn's insistence that black and white intermarriage would be the ultimate result of school desegregation made no sense, she argued, unless he believed that whites would "not be able to contain themselves." Marriage was a "contractual relation," she reminded him, and there would be no intermarriage with blacks "unless and until there are whites ready and willing to consent to such." The goal of Negroes was not to marry whites, she wrote. Rather, they were using the very structures set up by white

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24 D. E. Gwynn, "Yankee View of History," Public Pulse, *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, August 14, 1954, 4; D. E. Gwynn, "Communist Infiltration," Public Pulse, *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, October 17, 1954, 53. For further analysis of how white Southerners tried to link black activism to Communism, see Manfred Berg, "Black Civil Rights and Liberal Anticommunism: The NAACP in the Early Cold War," *The Journal of American History* 94, no. 1 (June 2007): 75-96; Jeff Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare: Segregation and Anti-Communism in the South, 1948-1968* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Press, 2004); and James Graham Cook, "The Red Hunters," in *The Segregationists* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1962), 293-303.

men—the courts and legislatures—to throw off their burden as "second-class citizens." They wanted no special privileges.[25]

In addition to all this letter writing in mid-1954, Gwynn apparently also mailed more than two thousand letters and "selected newspaper articles" to "important people throughout the nation" he hoped to influence. By November, Gwynn had also gathered more than six thousand signatures urging continued segregated schools and had "just placed [this] . . . petition in the Governor's hands." All this very open opposition activity came before Gwynn achieved another goal in his campaign to stop race mixing in schools—becoming a member of the local school board where he could make sure the schools followed a policy of segregation.[26]

In August of 1954, the thirty-six-year-old Gwynn filed for a seat on the school board in Leaksville Township and was elected in November. Through numerous letters in both the local and the main regional newspapers, the people of the Leaksville School District had had plenty of opportunity to learn of Gwynn's passionate views against race-mixing in the months before he was elected to the school board, and with this understanding of his views, they strongly voted for him. A father of two school-age children, Gwynn was introduced in the local paper as a Business Administration graduate of the University of North Carolina (UNC) and a veteran of World War II in Europe. His campaign material included a card with his picture on the front and a list of three promises on the back: "no secret meetings"; publishing annual financial reports; and his

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25 Joe Hinnant, "American History," Public Pulse, *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, August 23, 1954, 6; Maggie Mayes Vaughn, "Second-Class Citizenship," Public Pulse, *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, August 19, 1954, 8.

26 Dallas Gwynn to W. C. George, November 19, 1954, Box 2, Folder 10, George Papers, SHC.

first priority, "maintaining our present system of separate and equal schools for the different races." As he explained to another segregationist just after the election, "I made my platform very strong on maintaining segregation" and "received the highest vote ever given a candidate in this Township." Gwynn, did, in fact, lead the ticket, getting five hundred votes more than his nearest opponent in the eleven-man race. He and the other two top vote-getters took their seats at the December 1954 board meeting, Gwynn for a six-year term. The state plan to shift the power of pupil assignment to local school boards fit in perfectly with the goals of this one particular citizen who would become not only a leader in the local schools, but a figure in the statewide segregationist movement as well. From this seat, he could monitor closely and likely stop any move to accept blacks in the white schools of the mill towns of Leaksville, Spray, and Draper.[27]

The trajectory of resistance to desegregation in North Carolina, and especially in Rockingham County, took a turn toward strong and vocal opposition with a single article that appeared all over the South on November 19, 1954. The article announced that Dr. Wesley C. George, anatomy professor at the University of North Carolina's Medical School, had come "out of seclusion" because he felt compelled to resist the Supreme Court mandate. He and a few others in Orange County, North Carolina, were circulating a petition opposing racial integration to be delivered to the North Carolina governor. The widely published article also included an interview with George that allowed him to make his biological argument for Negro inferiority and against race-mixing in schools. Using

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27 "'Dal' Gwynn Announces for School Board," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, August 26, 1954, 1; Campaign card for D. E. "Dal" Gwynn, November 2, 1954 election, Leaksville Township School Board, Box 2, Folder 10; and Dallas Gwynn to W. C. George, November 19, 1954, Box 2, Folder 10, George Papers, SHC; "Elected School Board Trustees," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, November 4, 1954, 1.

the tenets of scientific racism, George said that desegregation of schools would lead to racial destruction. "No cattle breeder would want to cross up his productive stock with a stock with an unproven record," he said. "When you cross up different breeds of animals, including man, you spoil the breed." As George explained his position to a supporter, "Bringing the two sexes of the two races together in more intimate social and semi social relations, as in schools, during childhood and young adulthood promotes the illicit . . . crossing of blood." This mixing would result in lowering the quality of the white race, George said, as blacks had been proven inferior through tests. These arguments were the basis of a pamphlet widely circulated in late 1954 (and for the next decade) by segregationists keen on tying their stand to the reputation of a scientist and professor at a university of some prestige. White supremacist groups all across the South were eager to distribute his writings. The leader of the American States' Rights Association, Inc., for example, wrote from Birmingham, Alabama, saying that he was having five thousand more copies of George's pamphlet printed. Other segregationist leaders corresponded with George from Mississippi, Georgia, and South Carolina, sharing their own materials and informing him that his academic standing and "scientific" arguments were very useful to them.[28]

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28 "School Segregation Urged To Prevent Racial Destruction," *News and Courier* (Charleston, SC), November 19, 1954; "UNC Professor Pushes Segregation Petition," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, November 19, 1954, 1; W. C. George to a Mr. French, December 2, 1954, Box 2, Folder 11; Olin H. Horton, president, American States' Rights Association, Inc., Birmingham, Alabama, to W. C. George, [1955], Box 2, Folder 13 and March 4, 1955, Box 2, Folder 14; G. L. Ivey, president, National Association for the Advancement of White People, Inc., Florence South Carolina, to W. C. George, December 3, 1954, Box 2, Folder 11; Robert B. Patterson, secretary, Association of Citizens' Councils of Mississippi, to W. C. George, January 25, 1955, Box 2, Folder 13; and Pamphlet of States' Rights Council of Georgia, Inc., Augusta Georgia, Box 2, Folder 13, all in George Papers, SHC; Cook, *The Segregationists*, 353. This 1962 book exploring the range of segregationist views called George "probably the segregationist South's most admired biologist."

If the letters George received in late 1954 and early 1955 were representative of public reaction, the professor's writings created a stir among segregationists all over the South. Scores wrote to George in Chapel Hill, a handful criticizing him, but the bulk overwhelmingly in support. Letters poured in, asking for copies of his petition to circulate and praising his courage to speak out on a campus where he appeared to have few allies. They condemned UNC student editor Charles Kuralt for saying that the campus was ready to accept black undergraduates and attacked the sinister work of the NAACP. These early letters mirrored quite closely the issues addressed in other segregationist literature and were especially similar to the writings of the segregationists of the Deep South, particularly the White Citizens' Councils of Mississippi and Alabama. It is not clear whether correspondents with George had read Judge Tom Brady's *Black Monday*, but it is clear that their thinking was remarkably the same. The many segregationist propaganda pieces sent to George illustrated the nature of the emotional involvement of many in the crusade to stop integration. One was a collection of photos of white women dancing or otherwise in the arms of black men. A pair of images titled "The Negro" and "The Ape" purported to compare their anatomy. The rhetoric repeatedly included warnings about mongrelization that would result from race mixing. Rob Christensen, who has written extensively about North Carolina politics, has asserted that the language of this propaganda of the mid-1950s "seemed to be lifted straight out of the white supremacy campaigns of 1898 and 1900."[29]

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29 Charles H. Doggett to W. C. George, November 19, 1954, Box 2, Folder 10; "Segregation or Degeneration?" Box 2, Folder 14; and National Citizens Protective Association, St. Louis, MO, "The Ape" and "The Negro," Box 2, Folder 12, all in George Papers, SHC; Christensen, *The Paradox of Tar Heel Politics*," 163. Numerous other letters to George in 1954 and 1955 could be cited. For a

After George's announcement about his petition, one of the first responses to arrive, dated the same day the article appeared in newspapers, was a three-page letter from Dallas Gwynn of Leaksville. Handwritten on his business stationery, the letter, in which Gwynn boasted of his extensive writing campaign and successful run for school board (even including copies of his campaign literature), assured George that the "masses of the people are of our same belief." He roundly condemned the "modern and progressive Church and Carpetbagger politicians" who were working in an "unholy alliance against the truth." Gwynn characterized other faculty as having fallen victim to the "sickly" and "sentimental" views of integrationists but praised George for the "fine spirit of courage" he was showing at the University, Gwynn's alma mater. This correspondence prompted by the article about George's views would be the beginning of a long association between the two men and really marked the initiation of a broader segregationist Patriots of North Carolina movement.[30]

In addition to Gwynn, early supporters included at least two other citizens from Rockingham County who contacted George immediately. Carl H. Weatherly, a former Leaksville High School principal, wrote that the University needed more men like George on its faculty. He resented the "intellectuals who advocate social equality" and was

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discussion of Judge Tom Brady, segregationist arguments and strategies, and the beginnings of the White Citizens' Councils, see Cook, *The Segregationists*, 13-34. For further analysis of the White Citizens' Councils, see Stephanie R. Rolph, "The Citizens' Council and Africa: White Supremacy in Global Perspective," *Journal of Southern History* 82, no. 3 (August 2016): 617-50; Neil R. McMillen, *The Citizens' Council: Organized Resistance to the Second Reconstruction, 1954-64* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971); and Jason Morgan Ward, *Defending White Democracy: The Making of a Segregationist Movement and the Remaking of Racial Politics, 1936-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

30 Dallas Gwynn to W. C. George, November 19, 1954, Box 2, Folder 10, George Papers, SHC.

disgusted with the *Brown* decision, the "most stupid and uncalled for thing" done to the South since Reconstruction. The other Rockingham County resident who contacted George immediately after reading about his petition was Paul D. Hastings, a Reidsville, North Carolina, furniture store owner, and, like Gwynn, a member of his district's school board. Hastings first wrote to George that he was "in complete accord" with the professor's views on segregation. He was also apparently already deeply involved in racial issues, as he included some enclosures which he had been gathering, specifically mentioning his suspicion of "the ultimate goal" of the NAACP—race-mixing—as evidenced by the fact that the organization's leader, Walter White, was "married to a white woman." All three of these early Rockingham correspondents with George—Gwynn, Weatherly and Hastings—would become charter members of the Patriots of North Carolina, a statewide segregationist organization that had particular influence in their home county. The Patriots were the state's equivalent to the White Citizens' Councils, which had organized in Mississippi a year earlier.[31]

While appearing to operate patiently within the framework set by state officials, Gwynn, Hastings, and other segregationists were actively making plans for firm opposition to *Brown* in the northern Piedmont. Textile businessman Eugene Hood of Greensboro was particularly persistent in calling for a statewide organization. He wrote many letters to George, offering ideas for getting organized, detailing complaints of pro-integrationist actions in the Greensboro area, and urging him to take leadership of the

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31 Carl H. Weatherly to W. C. George, November 19, 1954, Box 2, Folder 10, George Papers, SHC; Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, May 14, 1946; Paul D. Hastings to W. C. George, November 19, 1954, Box 2, Folder 10, George Papers, SHC; "'Citizens Councils' Are Established," *Southern School News*, October 1, 1954, 9.

group. George's prestige as an anatomy professor and scientist was of prime importance in lending the organization credibility. Segregationists planned throughout the months following *Brown* and were chartered in August 1955 as the Patriots of North Carolina, Inc. They were not the first segregationist group to organize in North Carolina, however. A year earlier, the North Carolina Association for the Preservation of the White Race, Inc. had formed in Durham. A loom fixer in a textile mill, R. T. Pitts, spoke for this group: if young black and white people went to "schools, dances, and social gatherings" together the result would be "serious trouble." This association shared core concerns of other segregationists but lacked leadership.[32]

The Patriots, on the other hand, set out to recruit from among influential men already in positions of economic and political power in their communities. The group started with "fifty or more handpicked men" at organizational meetings in Greensboro. In June 1955, organizers had "just started trying to get at least 100 names of representative men and women" to submit with incorporation documents. Paul Hastings of Reidsville, one of the most active early members, focused on connecting with potential supporters. He wrote "personal letters to 46 prominent contacts" in July 1955. Efforts such as these succeeded as the core group presented their organization to dozens of community and business leaders as an urgent patriotic endeavor to maintain the Southern way of life. The group gained many prominent members, including three former speakers of the North Carolina House of Representatives, textile executives, a former

32 Eugene A. Hood to W. C. George, November 19, 1954, Box 2, Folder 10; November 22, 1954, Box 2, Folder 10; March 17, 1955, Box 2, Folder 14; and July 13, 1955, Box 2, Folder 15, all in George Papers, SHC; "Opening of School Shows Varied Pattern," *Southern School News*, October 1, 1954, 1.

mayor of Greensboro, and a trustee of the University system. Calling for segregation of the races and the protection of the "purity and culture of the white race and Anglo-Saxon institutions," the Patriots claimed 356 charter members. Members' names (sometimes along with their towns of residence) were listed in newspaper articles about the group all across the state, along with a document stating the organization's purposes. This list named several from Rockingham County, most in the Leaksville area, including three mayors, a school board chairman, a retired Wake Forest College professor, and a county commissioner. The greatest number of charter members were from Greensboro, where the organization was headquartered. George was elected the president and Dallas Gwynn of Leaksville vice-president. In the second issue of its newspaper in November 1955, the White Citizens' Council thanked the North Carolina Patriots for their support and welcomed them into the crusade against race-mixing. Through George and the other officers, correspondence and coordination with other state segregationist organizations increased.[33]

Some of the Patriots' organizational documents give insight into the "behind the scenes" factors involved in their organization. Early signers were officially charter members and had become so in the presence of notaries. For publicity's sake, there was an effort to have the charter dated July 4, 1955, to align with the group's name of

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33 Eugene A. Hood to W. C. George, March 30, 1955, Box 2, Folder 14; June 30, 1955, Box 2, Folder 15; and July 13, 1955, Box 2, Folder 15, all in George Papers, SHC; Batchelor, *Race and Education in North Carolina*, 58-59; "Patriots Meet in Wentworth Tonight," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News,* March 24, 1956, 16; "N.C. Governor Asks Voluntary Segregation: NAACP Balks," *Southern School News*, September 1955, 14; "State Group Will Oppose Integration," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, August 23, 1955, 1, 12; "Seven Leaksville Men Among Incorporators of Patriots Group To Keep Separate Schools," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, August 25, 1; *The Citizens' Council* (Jackson, MS), November 1955, 2, http://www.citizenscouncils.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=newspaper.

Patriots, and so those who had joined earlier were asked to go back and re-date their documentation. As they sought more members, Patriot officer Allison James, a Greensboro businessman, gave instructions to those collecting the sign-up sheets not only to recruit as many new members as possible but to make sure to write down the names and addresses of all those who refused to join. It is not clear what James and others might have intended to do with these names, but stated in documents that were not meant to become public, the directive sounded a great deal like a threat. Secrecy continued. At their first meeting in Greensboro after incorporation, the press was kept out. The organization also kept information on the activities of those they saw as their opponents, a sort of "enemies list" that included anyone participating at an interracial event. One document summarizing a Methodist gathering in Greensboro had the names of all participants and organizers underlined, including the African American minister and activist Douglas E. Moore of Leaksville.[34]

Over time the Patriots gained a significant roster of members and raised substantial funds, mainly in the Piedmont. In November 1955, Gwynn reported that "several hundred" members had been added in the Rockingham County area in the preceding three weeks. The group collected more than $2,000 in only ten days leading up to the special election on the Pearsall Plan. Gwynn spoke at numerous central North Carolina rallies and recruitment meetings—in Granville County, Winston-Salem,

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34 Eugene A. Hood to W. C. George, July 5, 1955, Box 2, Folder 14; Letter from Allison James, Executive Secretary of Patriots of North Carolina, Inc. to Charter Members, September 28, 1955, Box 3, Folder 16; "News Items in *Daily Tar Heel*, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, Saturday, March 19, 1955," and "Meeting Held at the Market Street Methodist Church, Greensboro, North Carolina, February 1, 1955," Box 2, Folder 14, all in George Papers, SHC; "First Meeting of Patriots Held Here; Integration Foes Bar Reporters," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, November 11, 1955, 17.

Kernersville, Randolph County—which were usually announced in major newspapers. Sometimes these notices went far beyond listing the location and times of meetings. Before he was to recruit members in nearby Caswell County, the *Leaksville News* described Gwynn as "widely known as an accomplished speaker," who had "a statewide reputation for his wit and keen sense of humor." His personal associations with respected community groups—the Leaksville Methodist Church, the Leaksville Township School Board, the Lions Club—added to Gwynn's biography. He had also "traveled widely and visited almost every country in the world," according to one rally announcement, a claim that may have seemed impressive, though unlikely, to readers. The Patriots were clearly receiving positive coverage locally, likely from having their own press releases published. Although the group may have inflated the reputations of some of their members and their participation numbers for publicity purposes, they *were* steadily growing in membership. At a March 1956 Charlotte rally, over four hundred Patriots heard Senator James O. Eastland of Mississippi speak. And the group was still gaining members among community leaders. In Lee County, the chairman and another member of the Sanford Board of Education's Advisory Committee announced they were joining the local Patriots chapter. North Carolina legislator Julian Allsbrook also often spoke in eastern counties on behalf of the Patriots. The group had expanded into at least thirty-three North Carolina counties in less than a year, and although the group did not officially disclose its membership totals, it claimed twenty thousand members in December 1955.[35]

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35 "Hundreds Enrolled in N.C. Patriots," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, November 18, 1955, 10; "Pearsall Plan Given Support of Patriots," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, August 15, 1956, 5; "Patriot Official Slated To Speak in Granville," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, August 19, 1956, 11; "Kernersville Patriots To Hold Rally Friday," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, June 6, 1956, 11; "Solicitor in Randolph

By early 1956, the White Citizens' Council newspaper reported that the Patriots were "working toward a million and a half members," according to E. L. Gavin, former U.S. Attorney for the Middle District, another speaker on the Patriots' behalf. Gavin also told the audience in Burlington, North Carolina that the "movement has the blessings of Governor Hodges of North Carolina." Certainly, one definite area of agreement between Hodges and the Patriots was their mutual disdain for the NAACP. Whether or not he actually supported the Patriots became a disputed claim, but significant evidence exists that the Patriots did, indeed, have an ally in the governor, often out of the public eye. Months before they were incorporated, Hodges corresponded with Patriot leadership but was concerned about keeping this contact out of the press. In early 1955, when he had been in office only about a month, the governor, through his secretary, E. L. Rankin, Jr., communicated with George at UNC. Instead of making a show in person of presenting Hodges a petition signed by three thousand, George was asked just to mail the petition in. Despite saying at a press conference on August 24, 1955, that his knowledge of the Patriots was "limited to what I have seen in the papers," Hodges had, in fact, already communicated with George, who was then president of the Patriots, and at least one other member, Eugene Hood of Greensboro. In a letter dated August 11, 1955, the governor thanked the professor for his support of the "voluntary segregation" speech. At the

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Candidate for Judge," *Greensboro* (NC) *Record*, February 29, 1956, 12; "D. E. Gwynn Will Address Caswell Rally," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, April 19, 1956, B1; "N.C. Governor, in Election Bid, Suggests New School Laws," *Southern School News*, March 1956, 16; "Special Session of N.C. Legislature Predicted After Segregation Report," *Southern School News*, January 1956, 4; "Patriots Planning To Increase Units," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, May 23, 1956, 19; "Two N. C. Solons Losers on Issue of 'Manifesto,'" *Southern School News*, June 1956, 8; Woodrow Price, "Hodges Believes Patriots, Inc., Can Be 'Quite a Force for Good,'" *News & Observer* (Raleigh, NC), December 16, 1955.

bottom of the letter, however, Hodges wrote cryptically, "Dr. George, I think there was a 'leak' somewhere and possibly from a newspaper." The next month, after receiving two more letters from George outlining his views, Hodges responded and inquired of George, "Have you any specific ideas as to what we can and ought to do if the Negroes do not accept the voluntary plan, and there are evidence that they will not." George replied that he would withdraw funding from any school that integrated, white or black. In his plan, "the school provided in that community for the offending race [who had transferred] would also lose its financial support." Publicly, Hodges told reporters who questioned him in December 1955 that the Patriots had "good people" in it and could be "quite a force for good." Knowing his many acquaintances among the members, especially those from his home county and some from his hometown Methodist church, Hodges likely had more insight into the group than he let on. Months earlier, Patriot organizer Eugene Hood had corresponded with the governor concerning whether the Patriots' views were extreme. Apparently Hodges had cautioned Hood, "I do not feel that we should be extreme either way." Hood replied that if feeling as he did about race-mixing was extreme, then "I am afraid that I am an extremist." He advised the Governor not to compromise.[36]

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36 "Washington Notes," *The Citizens' Council* (Jackson, MS), January 1956, 3, http://www.citizenscouncils.com/index.php?option=comcontent&view=newspaper; E. L. Rankin, Jr., to W. C. George, January 14, 1955, Box 2, Folder 13, George Papers, SHC; Luther H. Hodges, "Comment on the Patriots Incorporated," August 24, 1955, in *Messages, Addresses, and Public Papers*, vol. 1, 566; Luther H. Hodges to W. C. George, August 11, 1955, Box 3, Folder 16; Luther H. Hodges to W. C. George, September 2, 1955, Box 3, Folder 16; and W. C. George to Luther H. Hodges, September 7, 1955, Box 3, Folder 16, George Papers, SHC; Woodrow Price, "Hodges Believes Patriots, Inc., Can Be 'Quite a Force for Good,'" *News & Observer* (Raleigh, NC), December 16, 1955; Eugene A. Hood to Luther H. Hodges, June 15, 1955, Box 2, Folder 15, George Papers, SHC.

When the Patriots were formed, the editors of the Raleigh *News and Observer* were extremely skeptical about the motives of the organization, characterizing them as extremists who seemed "designed for the coercion which Governor Hodges has rejected." Events at a Winston-Salem rally just before the 1956 Democratic primary seemed to bear out these misgivings. Mayor Marshal Kurfees, who was running for Senate against Sam Ervin, was in attendance and experienced the Patriots' "pressure politics." The group had sent letters to voters endorsing Ervin for his signing of the Southern Manifesto. Kurfees said he decided to take the stage and make his remarks after Gwynn "insinuated that Gov. Luther Hodges was sponsoring the Patriot program." When Kurfees told the crowd that the Patriots were "fomenting racial hatred" and said, "I am glad you did not endorse me," his microphone was shut off and he was asked to leave. The increasingly bold political involvement of the Patriots, especially during the 1956 election campaign, pushed Hodges further in their direction. He spoke more and more with a similar rhetoric. One Patriot leader even said their group was "responsible for the governor's change of heart" regarding the Pearsall amendments and his eventual support of the proposals to assure continued segregation. In the aftermath of *Brown*, white resistance was intense from the Patriots of North Carolina, with pressure reaching all the way into the governor's office.[37]

On the ground in Rockingham County, the Patriots had an especially strong presence. Besides Gwynn, another Rockingham County Patriot member was busy working on the group's behalf, focusing on churches and unions. Paul Hastings, a long-

37 "Patriots and Governor Hodges," *News & Observer* (Raleigh, NC), August 24, 1955; "Rep. Chatham Asserts Patriot Leaders Hurting Racial Good Will," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, May 24, 1956, 2; "N.C. Patriots Will Support School Amendments," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, August 16, 1956, 1, 6.

time school board member in the Reidsville district, was less politically overt than Gwynn but was also effective in blunting the likelihood that area citizens would accept integration of the races. Both before and after *Brown*, Hastings was a frequent speaker on religious topics at community gatherings. As a member of the segregationist movement, he concentrated on speaking to clubs and churches in the Piedmont area, writing scores of personal letters to prospective members and working within the structure of the Presbyterian Church where he had been instrumental as a lay leader for several years. As Hastings was introduced to other segregationists, he was characterized as "one of the prominent leaders in the Presbyterian Church effort to prevent union with the [more liberal] northern branch." Attempting to stunt the effect of any endorsement of desegregation by church people in the area, Hastings wrote long arguments to other religious leaders and was published in the *Southern Presbyterian Journal,* a publication that had been established in 1942 to act as the voice of conservatives in the denomination. Even before *Brown*, he wrote against liberalism in his church, and in the months following the May 1954 decision, Hastings stepped up his call for the church to leave the segregation issue to individuals and local churches. Only a few days after the *Brown* decision, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church had voted to condemn racial segregation and support the court's decision. It recommended that Presbyterians see *Brown* as "the Christian ideal" and work to bring their actions "in line" with this standard. In a lengthy speech to the state Synod the following year, Hastings urged North Carolina Presbyterians not to accept this declaration. He carefully laid out the same arguments presented by state political leaders—that North Carolina's segregated schools

were among the best in the nation and that they would be destroyed if forced to integrate.[38]

To insist that all Presbyterians accept the *Brown* ruling, Hastings argued, would be to sow discord in local churches. By endorsing *Brown,* the church leadership had told "all the Presbyterians and other citizens of North Carolina, what you are doing is un-Christian and should be done away with," Hastings said. If this condemnation continued, thousands of Presbyterians in the state would "rise up in justified, righteous indignation," he warned. He recommended instead that the church "say nothing" regarding segregation. Still the Synod voted to adopt the declaration in favor of *Brown*. Despite this setback, Hastings later reported to Patriots president George that fifteen ministers had been forced out by their congregations because of the segregation issue. Backing up his fellow Patriot, Gwynn also wrote about the role of the church in the aftermath of *Brown.* In a piece printed in all the news publications in Rockingham County, Gwynn argued that the Biblical model meant that the church should have no role in condemning segregation. Jesus had refused to speak authoritatively on civil laws; therefore, Christian denominations, such as his own, the United Methodist Church, should stay out of

38 "Reidsville Church Programs Listed," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, August 25, 1951, 5; "Hastings To Speak," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, March 12, 1952, 16; "Paul Hastings Talks to Christian Council," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, April 13, 1955, 6; "Paul Hastings Speaks about Court Decision," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, May 10, 1956, B1; Paul D. Hastings, "Speech to the Presbyterian Synod of North Carolina," July 22, 1955, Box 2, Folder 15; and Eugene A. Hood to W. C. George, July 13, 1955, Box 2, Folder 15, George Papers, SHC; Walter H. Conser and Robert J. Cain, *Presbyterians in North Carolina: Race, Politics, and Religious Identity in Historical Perspective* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2011), 194-96; Paul H. Hastings, "The Die Is Cast," *Southern Presbyterian Journal* 13, no. 1 (May 5, 1954): 6-8, https://archive.org/stream/southernpresbyte13dend/southernpresbyte13denddjvu.txt.

political matters and leave the decision about whether to accept racial segregation to "the consciences of those directly concerned."[39]

In addition to pleading urgently with church leadership to reject *Brown*, Hastings also set out to influence the large number of white union workers in his home county to do the same. Further, he sought to discourage employees from joining unions at all. Rockingham County had a significant union presence in the mid-1950s, in both textiles and tobacco. Hastings, according to historian Pete Daniel, "cleverly combined anti-union and anti-integration activities" by writing the owner of Cannon Mills. He sent him information claiming that unions had made large donations to the NAACP. If Cannon wanted to keep his employees out of unions, this damning information should be distributed at his mills and "would keep more textile workers from joining the unions than everything else put together," Hastings said. As proof, he asserted that the Congress of Industrial Organizations union at the textile mills in Spray had contributed $25 to the Rockingham Patriots. "We have a large membership from the mills in Leaksville, Spray, and Draper," he claimed.[40]

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39 Paul D. Hastings, "Speech to the Presbyterian Synod of North Carolina," July 22, 1955, Box 2, Folder 15, George Papers, SHC; Hastings quoted in Daniel, *Lost Revolutions*, 206; Dallas E. Gwynn, "The Church and Segregation," *The Advisor,* August 1956. Also printed in *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, June 29, 1956, 12; *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, July 5, 1956. For historical perspectives on religion and segregation, see Paul Harvey, *Christianity and Race in the American South: A History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016); Carolyn Renée Dupont, *Mississippi Praying: Southern White Evangelicals and the Civil Rights Movement, 1945-1975* (New York: NYU Press, 2013); James Graham Cook, "The Clergymen," in *The Segregationists* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1962); Peter C. Murray, Methodists and the Crucible of Race, 1930-1975 (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004); and Charles Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920.* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980).

40 Paul D. Hastings to William C. Cannon, June 19, 1956, quoted in Daniel, *Lost Revolutions*, 206.

At the same time they were deeply involved in resistance efforts through the Patriots of North Carolina, Gwynn and Hastings were active members of local boards of education in Rockingham County. Hastings's activities on the board in Reidsville were generally routine, but he seemed to have a special role in proposing resolutions in the aftermath of *Brown* that directly targeted how the Board would address the issue of segregation. His view of a segregated Reidsville before *Brown* was that the town had "no serious problems of any kind between the two races in the schools or in the community." As he told a state Presbyterian meeting in mid-1955, the *Brown* decision "didn't solve any problems for us, but it did create problems which no one in our community has an answer to." As both a school board member and a devoted member of the Patriots, he was in a position to closely monitor any developments and literally have a vote on whether to maintain segregation.[41]

On the Leaksville Township School Board, chaired by another member of the Patriots, Harry Davis, Gwynn was active and outspoken in his first year and wasted no time in focusing on race. In addition to all of the Patriot organizing efforts in the summer of 1955 as the group launched statewide, Gwynn also presented the Leaksville Board with a lengthy resolution in support of the state plans placing authority for student assignment entirely with local boards. The resolution read almost entirely as Hodges worded his views in the later pamphlet paid for, printed, and distributed by the governor: "Whereas, there seems to be a state policy evolving" for continuing to run the public

41 Minutes of Reidsville City Schools, November 21, 1955; Hastings, "Speech to the Presbyterian Synod of North Carolina," July 22, 1955, Box 2, Folder 15, George Papers, SHC.

schools "according to the same organization as heretofore," the Leaksville board would operate its schools in the coming year just as in the previous year—segregated by race. The resolution concluded by naming a committee appointed to "study" the Supreme Court ruling to determine "how the local school may be affected," with Dallas Gwynn as chairman. The committee did have three black members, including the principal of Douglass School, W. C. Ellerbe, who had long been quietly working with white leadership. Although local black residents recall Ellerbe as a strong leader for the African American community, one who would not have been told what to do by whites, it is hard to imagine that Gwynn would have put anyone on the committee whom he thought would openly challenge him. It appears that the Patriot leader had crafted a committee structure that would project a thoughtful, fair approach to the public while making sure he and other like-minded whites remained in control of the situation. Gwynn was elected chairman of the Leaksville School Board for 1957 and became even more prominent as a community leader.[42]

Perhaps the most successful political endeavor of the Patriots organization came in May 1956, one that helped unseat an incumbent Congressman and influenced the state's Governor to move more openly in their direction. For more than two months, the Patriots carried on a bitter campaign against U. S. Congressman Thurmond Chatham's re-election because he had refused to sign the Southern Manifesto. The so-called Manifesto

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42 Davis, Gwynn, and Hastings were listed as charter members of the segregationist organization, the Patriots of North Carolina. See Charter of Patriots of North Carolina, Press Release, August 22, 1955, Box 3, Folder 16, George Papers, SHC; Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, August 3, 1955; Gloria Purcell, interview by author, February 24, 2017; "School Board Chairman Named," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, December 13, 1956, B2.

was a repudiation of the *Brown* decision; signers agreed that the Supreme Court had wrongly decided the case and pledged themselves to resist the mandate through all legal means. Chatham was a widely traveled, wealthy textile executive, who had much in common with Governor Luther Hodges. The owner of a large textile mill that produced blankets and auto upholstery, Chatham had represented the seven counties of the North Carolina Fifth District since 1949. In the 1954 Congressional election, he had had no primary challenge and had easily defeated his Republican opponent, Joe New, besting him two to one in the Leaksville area. However, after he refused to sign the Southern Manifesto, as 101 other Southern members of Congress had done, Chatham became the target of a sustained campaign against his re-election. The Congressman explained his refusal to sign, saying that he did not want to be a part of any action that would "tear down the power and prestige of the Supreme Court." "We should not forget that in lands ruled by dictators, the courts were destroyed first," he stated. "We should concentrate on working it out, and not on defiance." The Patriots, however, used Chatham's explanations to mark him as soft on segregation and set out to insure his electoral defeat.[43]

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43 "Patriots Brand Chatham As 'Uninformed Citizen,'" *Greensboro* (NC) *Record*, March 27, 1956, 1; W. C. Burton, "Segregation Letter Sent to Chatham," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, March 25, 1956, 1; "Two Chatham Officials Receive Promotions," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, February 15, 1956, 6; "Richard Thurmond Chatham," Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=C000336 (accessed June 20, 2016); "To the Democrats of Rockingham County," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, May 24, 1954, 8; "Rockingham Elects All Democrats," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, November 11, 1954, 12; Bruce Jolly, "Third Party Intent Denied in Southern Declaration against Integration Rule," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, March 13, 1956, 1.

At a large rally in Rockingham County in March 1956, a crowd of seven hundred heard from speaker I. Beverly Lake. Then the Patriots, led by Gwynn of Leaksville, demanded in a harsh open letter that Chatham answer several questions concerning segregation. They would not like his answers. He replied that he felt the *Brown* ruling was the law of the land and that it should be respected. To prevent Chatham's re-election, the Patriots mailed out more than seven thousand letters to their members, charging that Chatham did not believe as the majority of his constituents did that schools should remain segregated; they should instead support Ralph J. Scott of Danbury for Congress. Scott, who had filed to run against Chatham before the Southern Manifesto controversy, insisted numerous times that he was not running on the segregationist Patriot platform. Chatham fought back against the Rockingham Patriots, charging that they were "preaching rabble rousing passion and prejudice." When Chatham said that he could not represent the views of the Patriots, Gwynn seized on his words and wrote to area newspapers that, during the current term, Chatham had not represented his or many other constituents' views because he was absent for roll call votes 61 percent of the time. Chatham had, in fact, missed several recent House sessions when he was traveling as a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, where he had risen through seniority. Realizing that absenteeism was not as effective an issue as race, just before the primary, the Patriots renewed their racial attacks on Chatham, demanding to know why he had "never once criticized the NAACP."[44]

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44 W. C. Burton, "Segregation Letter Sent to Chatham," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, March 25, 1956, 1; "Chatham Hit by Official of Patriots," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, April 21, 1956, 3; "Danbury Solicitor Files for Congressional Race," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, March 7, 1956, 5; "Scott Replies to Chatham Statement," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, May 14, 1956, 1; "Solicitor Scott Refuses To

In the midst of the anti-Chatham campaign, a prominent local leader broke with the organization in a political challenge to the Patriots, one that was reported in newspapers across the state. John Smith, Sr., who had just served twelve years as Leaksville mayor, tried to distance himself from the group, which he called "the opposite of patriotic." He had joined the group when Patriot leaders visited his home and wanted his help in getting "four or five good people in Rockingham County to help solve the Negro problem in the best interests of everybody," Smith said. Acknowledging that he had been a charter member, Smith announced his resignation from the organization after local Patriots pressured the leader of the Leaksville Methodist Men to withdraw an invitation to Congressman Chatham, who was scheduled to speak at the church. Smith charged the Patriots with damaging "the cause of race harmony" in North Carolina with their "fire and thunder." Chatham was to speak on "World Peace," according to Smith, and he was disgusted with the Patriots for interfering in the efforts of the church for the sake of their crusade for segregation and against Chatham. As a result, the people of Leaksville Methodist had been divided by this incident, and some were even thinking of leaving the church. "This is a terrible thing," Smith said. "I want no part of it and want my feelings known." He hoped to call attention to the "dissension being created" in the county by "Dallas Gwynn and his followers" and demanded that they account for every bit of the money they had collected for the Patriots. The Patriots fired back that since Smith had never paid his $1 registration fee, he was not even a member of the

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Ask Patriots' Help in Congress Race," *Greensboro* (NC) *Record*, March 27, 1956, 1; D. E. Gwynn, "Mr. Chatham's Attendance," Public Pulse, *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, May 4, 1956, 8; "House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Praises Chatham," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, May 14, 1956, 1; "Patriots Demand More Answers from Rep. Chatham," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, May 24, 1956, 1.

organization. He had never brought in another member and had "never given one cent" to the group. Smith was slinging accusations at the Patriots, they said, because he was Chatham's local campaign manager. Smith responded that the Patriots were just trying to "stir up trouble and become a political power."[45]

The Patriots exhibited some of that political power in the May 1956 Democratic primary. Despite advertising that touted the Congressman's military service in both world wars, seniority, and committee status, the efforts of Chatham and his supporters were not enough to repel the primary challenge. Ralph Scott defeated the Fifth District incumbent by nearly 5,000 votes. More than 3,200 of that margin came from Rockingham County, where the Patriots had worked so persistently against him. Two of the three North Carolina Congressmen who had not signed the Manifesto lost their seats. Chatham attributed his loss to the issue of race; his refusal to sign the Southern Manifesto "meant the difference between winning and losing," he said. "I was defeated by a difference of opinion concerning the most important question that faces the South today," he told Rockingham County voters in a "Thank You" ad after the election. In the process, he insisted, the Patriots had "absolutely . . . hurt racial matters in North Carolina." The result of this segregationist campaign was both Chatham's defeat and a very public rift

45 Arthur Johnsey, "Chatham Reported Hurt in Dispute Over Issue of Racial Segregation," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, May 10, 1956, 6; "Ex-Mayor of Leaksville Resigns from Patriots," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, May 16, 1956, 1; "John Smith, Sr., Disappointed in Patriots, Sends in Resignation, Asks for Fund Accounting," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, May 17, 1956, 1; "Patriots Issue Answer to Charges by Smith," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, May 19, 1956, 1, 7; "Patriots Reply to John Smith, Sr., Say He Never Paid Membership Dues," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, May 24, 1956, 1, 2.

among the Democrats of the Fifth District, especially within the white leadership of the Leaksville area.[46]

As membership grew and activities intensified, questions about the reputation of the Patriots and their negative effect on racial politics also increased. Yet, in the actions of Dallas Gwynn, Paul Hastings, and others in Rockingham County, early segregationist strategies had played out successfully; they had spread their own "educational" material on race-mixing and elected to local school boards segregationists who would try to stop integration. In the months since the *Brown* decision had been announced, they had had numerous long letters arguing for continued segregation published in area newspapers and religious publications, had spoken to dozens of meetings, and had garnered victories in their own school board elections. Hastings had been elected to a second six-year term, and Gwynn had won by a landslide on a clearly stated segregationist platform. Both Gwynn and Hastings were in communication with a broad network of others in North Carolina and beyond who shared their beliefs and were in positions to actively resist the *Brown* mandate even more forcefully. Gwynn was even named to a board of "leading citizens from 10 Southern states" who were organizing a nationwide segregationist

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46 Chatham Election Advertisement, "To All Veterans," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, May 17, 1956, B1; "On Radio Today," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, May 23, 1956, 15; "Unofficial Returns of the Primary Election," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, May 28, 1956, 4; Arthur Johnsey, "Chatham Reported Hurt in Dispute over Issue of Racial Segregation," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, May 10, 1956, 6; "Thank You," Thurmond Chatham advertisement, *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, May 31, 1956, 2; Bruce Jolly, "Cooley Decries Dixie Manifesto as 'Dangerous,'" *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, March 14, 1956, 1; "'Manifesto' Believed To Cost Chatham," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, May 31, 1956, 3; "Race Issue Blamed," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, May 29, 1956, 1; "Patriot Attacked by Chatham," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, May 22, 1956, 1. Some of Ralph Scott's margin of victory in Rockingham County may have come from union support at the American Tobacco plant in Reidsville. Chatham and Charles Deane lost their Congressional seats, while Harold Cooley was able to hold on to his. Although Cooley had called the Manifesto a "dangerous document," he was by most accounts more effective in articulating his pro-segregationist stance.

organization. These members of the Patriots would have had plenty of reasons to assume that citizens such as themselves could influence racial politics and even stop school integration. After all, the North Carolina General Assembly had stated that "the mixing of the races in the public schools . . . cannot be accomplished and should not be attempted," and the state's citizens had voted overwhelmingly for the Pearsall Plan. The Governor had even insisted that he still believed the Supreme Court might reverse its decision.[47]

After the success of the anti-Chatham campaign, Gwynn especially had established himself as a major voice of segregation across the Piedmont of North Carolina and beyond. One historian has identified Gwynn as a "power in the North Carolina Patriots." As such, he helped to heat up the state's racial climate. He continued to attack any institution that considered integration—even at a glacial pace—to be possible or desirable. Before the state legislature considering the Pearsall Plan, he had "lectured the committee at length on the 'irresponsibility' of the court" in the *Brown* decision. Gwynn railed against professors at the Woman's College in Greensboro who were teaching the "unholy doctrine" of breaking down segregation and called for their dismissal. In July he wrote to the *Greensboro Daily News* again (the first time since a

47 "Incumbents Win in City Elections Here Saturday," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, May 10, 1954, 1; John U. Barr, "News Release," October 24, 1955, Box 3, Folder 17, George Papers, SHC; David S. Cecelski, *Along Freedom Road: Hyde County, North Carolina, and the Fate of Black Schools in the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 25; "Gov. Hodges Sees Possibility of Court Reversing Its Stand," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, June 28, 1956, 6. Cecelski cites the North Carolina General Assembly's joint resolution from April 1955. In a speech to the New York Rotary Club, Hodges explained that he believed the *Brown* decision was dependent on the make-up of the Supreme Court; current members had imposed "their own ideas of social order upon the nation," and these ideas might be different among future justices.

series of debates with the Rev. Douglas Moore of Leaksville about the NAACP and Communism) that the community should no longer support and fund the Girls Scouts of America. He was sure that "an overwhelming majority of the people in this area" (naming specifically Greensboro, Leaksville, and Reidsville) were "shocked" to see pictures in the newspaper of black and white Girl Scouts preparing to go to a national event together. He wanted a thorough investigation and "housecleaning" in the national leadership of the organization to get rid of those who want to "break down segregation." Such demands were now not just the charges of a private citizen or a local businessman. Gwynn also held a local leadership position in the Rockingham County Democratic Party and, in December 1956, was elected chairman of the Leaksville Township School Trustees and spoke for them on many occasions in the coming year. He had merged his roles, all with the ultimate purpose of maintaining segregation.[48]

The most comprehensive white resistance efforts in *Brown*'s aftermath, however, were directed by state officials, represented most fully in Rockingham County by the leadership of one of their own, Governor Luther Hodges. As one citizen wrote to the Greensboro paper in the midst of the creation of what would become known as the Pearsall Plan—where was the option to comply with the *Brown* mandate? "When, ever,

48 Daniel, *Lost Revolutions*, 202; "Pearsall Plan Is Legal, Legislators Are Told," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, July 26, 1956, 4; Dallas E. Gwynn, "The Mess at W.C.U.N.C.," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, July 26, 1956, 2; Dallas E. Gwynn, "Shocked," Public Pulse, *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, July 21, 1956, 4; "Precinct Chairman Named," *Greensboro* (NC) *Record*, September 21, 1955, 19; "Young Democrats Map Plans for Hodges Rally," *Greensboro* (NC) *Record*, January 13, 1956, 4; "Judge Susie Sharp Speaks to the Y. D. C.," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, September 11, 1958, 9; "School Board Chairman Named," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, December 13, 1956, 12; "N.C. Authorities Crack Down on Klan Activity," *Southern School News*, April 1958, 6. This article in a national publication identified Gwynn as both a representative of the local school board and the segregationist Patriots.

did Mr. Pearsall or Governor Hodges once hint in any way that there was an option for local school systems to de-segregate as well as continue in contempt of court?" The answer was that state leadership never really considered compliance as a viable alternative. As much as Hodges and other North Carolina leaders tried to argue that their way was a moderate, fair approach to "the problem created by the Supreme Court's decision," there was much in their plan that was unquestionably one-sided and even extreme. In many ways, the rhetoric did not sound substantially different from that of I. Beverly Lake or segregationist Patriot leaders.[49]

Hodges was, however, able to work the state's reputation for progressive and sensible policy to the advantage of his administration. In his 1962 memoir, he often mentioned the sterling reputation of a moderate North Carolina as a main cause for his success in recruiting businesses to the state. Despite the absolute stand against the Supreme Court's *Brown* ruling and the radical nature of the amendments to the state constitution passed in September 1956, somehow North Carolina continued to be thought of as a quite progressive place. The policies Hodges advanced—local Pupil Assignment Plans (taken straight from Alabama statutes); "study" committees across the state that looked fair and reasonable, but that were often merely for appearances' sake; the work of the Pearsall Committee; the provisions for closing of public schools and the approved use of taxpayer vouchers for white segregation academies placed into the state constitution; resolutions passed in the North Carolina General Assembly that the United States

49 Maurice A. Kidder, "Sees No 'Optional' Nature," Public Pulse, *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, July 21, 1956, 4. Kidder was a minister from Chapel Hill. He is identified as the president of the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Ministerial Association in Hodges, *Businessman in the Statehouse*, 80, 99.

Supreme Court had no right to "force" North Carolina schools to change; the Governor's statements that the Supreme Court was, in fact, wrong in their decision; the virtual war on the NAACP waged by Hodges and others (with rhetoric that closely aligned with that of the Patriots)—all are evidence of an extreme stand against *Brown*. This did not send the message to North Carolinians that their state was taking a "middle way." Instead, both whites and blacks understood clearly the string of policies and statements in the aftermath of *Brown*: there would be no integration of schools in North Carolina if state political leaders could stop it.

Historian David Cunningham has asserted that North Carolina political leaders such as Hodges had learned from the outcomes of the bitter 1950 Senate primary between Frank Porter Graham and Willis Smith that any electable candidate had to avoid "seeming soft on matters of racial separation." Graham, although a beloved president of the flagship university and a "cautious gradualist" on desegregation, lost to Smith in a second primary after innuendo and a series of race-baiting flyers crisscrossed the state, painting Graham as a Communist, a proponent of interracial sex, and "a turncoat on white supremacy," according to historian William A. Link. Multiple histories of 1950s politics analyze the Graham-Smith race in much the same way. Graham's associations with organizations on the left were assuredly a factor in the campaign, but it was the issue of race that made the election so bitter and a lesson for politicians to follow. Graham, a proven and popular statewide leader who "commanded respect for his deep humanity," could not be elected in the increasingly charged racial climate of 1950's North Carolina. This hard lesson, Cunningham argues, would shape state politics during the

desegregation struggle and for decades to come. With the Graham-Smith campaign as background, the result for the rest of the decade was that very few political leaders from Raleigh ever offered even gradual compliance with the Supreme Court ruling as a path forward for North Carolina.[50]

Still, by 1958, the Patriots, even those in Rockingham County who knew the Governor personally, were ready to abandon Hodges and other self-identified "moderates" to support segregationist I. Beverly Lake. New Patriots leader James Dees of Salisbury, speaking at a Winston-Salem meeting to another segregationist group, the Citizens Government Council, Inc., "attacked the Supreme Court, Gov. Hodges, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the 'liberal press,' the University of North Carolina and its former president Dr. Frank P. Graham" for what he contended was their influence in fostering integrated schools. And Dallas Gwynn, although he had endorsed the Pearsall Plan two years earlier, now complained that it had allowed local boards to decide whether to integrate schools, as three cities in the state (and a total of eleven black students) had done in the fall of 1957. What North Carolina needed was to "get a governor who is opposed to integration," he now argued: I. Beverly Lake. The contest between Lake and the more moderate Terry Sanford was about to be

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50 David Cunningham, *Klansville, U. S. A.: The Rise and Fall of the Civil Rights-Era Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 79; William A. Link, *Righteous Warrior: Jesse Helms and the Rise of Modern Conservatism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2008), 38, 34; Eamon, *The Making of a Southern Democracy*, 31. Graham was a statesman whom a fellow Senator called "the most Christ-like man I've ever known." Senator Wayne Morse of Oregon quoted in Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*, 5; William Snider, Greensboro newspaperman: "Built into Graham was a certain ironclad goodness . . . which stirred men and women to strive to be better than they were." Quoted in Christiansen, *The Paradox of Tar Heel Politics,* 121. For further discussion of the Graham-Smith 1950 U.S. Senate race, see Link, *Righteous Warrior,* 34-40; Eaton, *The Making of a Southern Democracy,* 25-31; and Julian M. Pleasants and August M. Burns III, *Frank Porter Graham and the 1950 Senate Race in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

set in motion and would mark a turning point in state leadership regarding desegregation.[51]

As those who crafted the state response in the aftermath of *Brown* prepared to leave office, they met in September 1960 to discuss how they had met the challenge of the Supreme Court ruling and the "problem the court" had created for the state. In a one-hundred-page transcript of this meeting, Governor Hodges, Pearsall, and their small group of advisers concluded that what they had accomplished was shifting the onus of the *Brown* mandate to African Americans to challenge pupil assignments and to local boards where they would mount legal defenses in the coming years. This process represented a powerful manifestation of white resistance. As letter writer Kidder had noted, "The burden for initiating obedience to the law is laid by our elected representatives upon those who may do so at their own peril." State leaders and other organized white resistance had effectively muted the various voices of those inclined to accept and comply with *Brown a*nd had put in place a system that would require enormous effort on the part of African Americans and their allies to dismantle it.[52]

51 "I. B. Lake Supported for Post," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, March 23, 1958, A16.

52 "Session on History of the Integration Situation in North Carolina," September 3, 1960, 100, Hodges Papers, SHC; Maurice A. Kidder, "Sees No 'Optional' Nature," Public Pulse, *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, July 21, 1956, 4.

CHAPTER VI

THE AFTERMATH OF *BROWN* IN ROCKINGHAM COUNTY: ADJUSTMENT, OPPORTUNITY, AND ACTIVISM WITHIN A SEGREGATED SYSTEM

White resistance to *Brown* was strong in Rockingham County and was especially influenced by the leadership of locals in the segregationist Patriots of North Carolina and the repeated insistence on maintaining "voluntary segregation" by Leaksville's own Governor Luther Hodges. Still, a variety of forces were working in other directions. In the mid-1950s, in addition to opposition to desegregation, three other general interpretations of the key terms of the *Brown II* action "with all deliberate speed" emerged. For some, the Supreme Court rulings in 1954 and 1955 meant making adjustments, depending on what local leaders thought the decision required of them and their schools. In response to the ruling, school boards made some changes in the way they conducted school business, and some whites indicated a reluctant acceptance of at least a degree of desegregation based on their respect for the authority of the courts. Others saw opportunities to insure some further improvements in their segregated schools and make gradual progress toward eventual desegregation. These citizens embraced the hope that the *Brown II* decision might, as one legal scholar asserted, "encourage ultimate compliance with less public disturbance." Some African Americans worked quietly with white allies for progress and generally used their new-found leverage to obtain improvements in their still-segregated schools. One white superintendent, working with local black leadership, showed support for desegregation, taking advantage of opportune

moments that helped prepare his community for compliance with the decision. A third interpretation was that *Brown* signaled a clear call to activism. These Rockingham County residents were more forceful in their embrace of the *Brown* decision. Actively working to break down the structures of Jim Crow, African American leaders in the county petitioned for desegregation of the schools, wrote and acted in defense of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), responded to segregationists, and organized themselves for future challenges to the system. Overall, there was substantial evidence that, had there been more state and local leadership encouraging acceptance just after the Supreme Court's decision, much of Rockingham County would have been open to the gradual desegregation of the schools.[1]

Adjustments

One of the first indications that the Supreme Court decision was having some effect on the county can be seen in the board minutes of the four school units. Aware that they were under more scrutiny regarding their policies and actions after *Brown*, school officials made adjustments, some small and others moderate, in how they did business and recorded their meetings. Two boards, those with Patriot members —Leaksville and Reidsville—adopted early, detailed pupil assignment plans based on the leadership of state legislators who were maneuvering to evade *Brown.* Similar to the Leaksville plan, the Reidsville resolution submitted by board member Paul Hastings was extensive,

1 Robert A. Leflar, "What the Court Really Said," *Southern School News*, June 8, 1955, 1 (Nashville, TN: Southern Education Reporting Service), Digital edition on-line at Civil Rights Digital Library, Digital Library of Georgia, http://rdl.usg.edu. In this article, New York University legal scholar Leflar analyzed the May 31, 1955 opinion of the Supreme Court focusing on five key terms: "good faith," practical flexibility," "prompt and reasonable start," "deliberate speed," and "equitable principles."

outlining the process in very formal language. All students were assigned to the schools they had previously attended, and it was made clear that all elementary students completing their grades at the two African American schools were to enroll at the black Booker T. Washington High School. Parents requesting transfers for their children had to file a written application at least two months ahead of the opening of schools. The ambiguous number of days specified by the plan (two months) made it more likely to be able to justify the denial of transfer requests. No principal could act independently of the school board in accepting students at their schools. After *Brown*, transfers of white students from one elementary school to another also were more specifically explained in the minutes because of public scrutiny, but transfers were allowed because of the board's ability to change assignments based on "the best interests of the pupil." This same reasoning would be used in coming years to deny transfers of black students to white schools. The format utilized by the rural Rockingham board was to have lists of students according to school "in compliance with the new assignment law." In what seems to have been a complicated and potentially flawed system, the board officially assigned each pupil (more than six thousand) "to the school on whose list his or her name appears." Then the board chairman and secretary signed each list. In contrast to the multi-page pupil assignment plans of Reidsville and Leaksville and the Rockingham board's lists of students by school, the first Madison statement addressing this issue was a mere sentence:

"The Madison City Board of Education assigned all children to the school they attended last year."[2]

One other immediate alteration could also be seen in the style and content of the recorded minutes of the school boards in Rockingham County, where the superintendents of each unit acted as secretaries to their boards and actually wrote the minutes of each meeting. The records of two of the boards—Madison and Rockingham—had already substantially changed in style and length with the advent of new superintendents in the years just preceding *Brown*. Both V. Mayo Bundy in Madison and Allan Lewis of the county system tended to write at length and in detail about the discussions and actions of their boards, providing an increased level of transparency to the public about their meetings. The other two districts—Leaksville and Reidsville—showed marked differences in their records before and after *Brown*. Their minutes post-*Brown* became somewhat longer and more detailed, suggesting that local leaders attempted to meet new expectations of greater racial equity and transparency and to justify their actions based on their understanding of what *Brown* meant for their district. More formality can be seen in the use of language, with increased references to "properly maintaining a constitutional school term" and resolutions being "duly adopted." For the first time, the chairman and secretary of the board officially signed the Reidsville minutes at the bottom of the page, starting in December 1954. Superintendent John Hough of the Leaksville District even began to use the very formal "Mssrs." as a courtesy title for the male board members.

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2 Minutes of Reidsville City Schools, June 4, 1956; Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, July 2, 1956; Enrollment figures for the 1956-1957 school year found in "County Schools Closing Out Successful Year," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, May 31, 1955, 1; Minutes of Madison City Schools, July 11, 1955.

The diction of the Leaksville minutes when referencing African American schools is especially notable. During the mid-1950s, nearly every mention of the black schools in district minutes post-*Brown* was accompanied by the possessive "our": "our Douglass school," "sidewalks in front of our Douglass School," "on our Douglass School site," transferring "colored . . . children from our Blue Creek and Sunshine elementary schools." Throughout the same time period, there were only two or three total references to white schools in the same manner. More than once, this language, which echoed expressions of southern white paternalism, was used repeatedly in a single set of minutes, especially when making claims to land or facilities, or when referencing board actions to change or improve black schools. For example, the August 1955 resolution on local control of student assignments, written by board member Dallas Gwynn, references "our Douglass School" twice, yet refers to no other school in the district in this manner.[3]

The school board minutes also reflect a concern for more accountability to the public in the aftermath of the *Brown* decision. Establishing regular meeting times and places also became an issue for districts that before *Brown* had their monthly meetings in places as varied as a hospital office, homes of board members, and at a church fish fry. In the mid-1950s, each of the boards in the county made efforts to establish and publicize official meeting days, times, and places—generally the administrative offices of each unit. Reidsville marked their regular meetings for the first Monday of each month at 5 p. m. and noted that this information should be published in the local newspaper.

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3 Minutes of Reidsville City Schools, December 2, 1954; Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, June 28, 1949; September 29, 1954; November 22, 1954; August 3, 1955; December 18, 1955; June 11, 1956; June 14, 1957; and September 6, 1957.

Defining official dates and places for their meetings proved a bit harder for the Leaksville board, which met even after *Brown* at an out-of-state restaurant across the Virginia line and shifted its meeting times within a matter of months from the third Tuesday evening to the second Monday to a Friday evening. Overall, the minutes of the four school boards reflected a greater awareness of a shift in racial politics in the county.[4]

At the time the *Brown* decision was handed down, the Rockingham County unit superintendent and school board no doubt felt that they had sufficiently met the facility needs of the African American community. Three consolidated black schools for grades one through eight in three corners of the rural county had just recently been built. With a good deal of effort over many months, about two dozen small, inadequate wooden schools in black communities all across the rolling hills of Rockingham had been closed and sold. At this point, African American students in the lower grades attended some of the most up-to-date facilities in the county. Still, the relationship of white school leaders to the black community was a concern, and in the aftermath of *Brown*, county district administrators responded to the decision by addressing the hiring of personnel. In July 1955, a reduction in state funds required that the rural county system would have to lose one of its instructional supervisors. Because of the "supreme court decision concerning segregation," the superintendent advised the Board that "it would be wise to retain the Negro supervisor" and move one of the white women supervisors back to an elementary classroom. "Mr. C. C. Watkins, Negro supervisor," the superintendent told the board,

4 Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, May 6, 1947; September 21, 1948; November 29, 1952; October 25, 1955; November 15, 1955; December 12, 1955; and June 14, 1957; Minutes of Reidsville City Schools, May 13, 1954.

"could do a great deal in helping to keep the Negroes satisfied and in helping us work out plans for integration when necessary." At this point, Watkins, a graduate of Johnson C. Smith University and Columbia University, had been supervisor of all the schools for African Americans in the county for about ten years. He was, as the superintendent suggested, rehired as supervisor and continued to work with black teachers and students across the county, remaining in this position through the desegregation process and retiring in 1973.[5]

In response to *Brown*, one further adjustment in the oversight of the local schools came in July 1955, when the Rockingham County Board, which was responsible for all the schools in the county outside the three town districts, addressed the "problem of closing the Goins School," an isolated, one-teacher "Indian" school. Although the board clearly did not feel integration of blacks and whites was "necessary" at that time, Superintendent Allan Lewis urged the board to move quickly to close the only single-teacher frame school left in the county system. There had been no mention of the 1954 Supreme Court *Brown* decision in their Board minutes for most of the first year after it was handed down, but "[b]ecause of the 'recent supreme court decision,'" Lewis said, "it might be wise to make a change at this time" regarding the Indian school. The Board agreed. The first act of desegregation in Rockingham County, then, did not involve the

5 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, October 2, 1944; and July 1, 1955; "Pearman Sworn In," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, July 5, 1955, 1; Jack Scism, "Remember When," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, April 29, 1990; Obituary, Clarence C. Watkins, Sr., *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, April 29, 1990, http://www.greensboro.com/out-of-county-obituaries/article_fcd108bc-ca0d-5868-b931-3d1866da9ddb.html. The Reidsville newspaper reported in 1955 that Miss Sue White was appointed supervisor of education for the white county schools, while former supervisor Miss Gertrude King would teach at the Stoneville School.

African American schools, but was, in fact, the closing of this schoolhouse and the integration of the Goinstown students into the white Stoneville School, about five miles away.[6]

Why did the Rockingham board believe the *Brown* ruling had particular significance for Goinstown? Perhaps school leaders felt the extra scrutiny brought about by the *Brown* decision meant that they could no longer neglect this small "Indian" school. Students there were clearly in substandard facilities, as had been described in a 1950 article in the *Greensboro Daily News*. The "keen-minded children" who attended there had to "eke out an elementary education" in the "crude," "unpainted" frame building. All forty of the students had to drink from a "galvanized water pail, using the same dipper" and try to learn in a cold place with a "temperamental pot-bellied stove." To close the Goinstown School and transfer the students, then, might be seen as an act in good faith to eliminate "separate and unequal" education for a "non-white" group.[7]

It is also likely that school leaders were aware of the two teen-aged girls in nearby Guilford County who, claiming their mixed Indian and white ethnicity, had tried to transfer from the black Dudley High School in Greensboro to the rural white Colfax School in the fall of 1954. The girls were rejected and told that Colfax could not accept transfers from a black school. If they could prove their Indian ancestry, the school superintendent told them, then he saw no reason they could not be admitted. If they were, instead, blacks merely claiming Indian blood, then the answer was, "No." Perhaps

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6 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, July 1, 1955.

7 Billie Jacobs Wright, "Goins School Still Will Have One Room, One Teacher, Bright Obedient Pupils," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, May 21, 1950, 65.

the Rockingham County school leaders saw the potential for a similar problem in their system. To wait was to risk Goinstown being stigmatized as a black school. No doubt the decision to transfer the Goinstown students had at its root the status of the area's mixed-race residents as "almost white" and the perceived necessity of claiming "whiteness" while there was still that opportunity.[8]

Many researchers consider the Goinstown community to be one of the Melungeon, or mixed, "tri-racial" groups that appear throughout the Southeast. The small, isolated community in the northwest corner in "about the highest spot" of the county had a long history of racial ambiguity, its residents having been identified with nineteen different racial labels in death records from 1912-1950, including black, white, Indian, mulatto, and even Portuguese. Historian Mark Edwin Miller has noted that dozens of such "Indian" communities in the South existed and were labeled by their neighbors with a variety of names, sometimes pejorative, all indicating some "mixture of Indian, black, and white, often with traditions of shipwrecked pirates or lost Portuguese or Spanish sailors thrown in for good measure." Over the decades, as did similar communities elsewhere in the rural South, the mixed-race group in Rockingham County insisted on being identified as Indian, thereby gaining a status higher than area blacks. Historian Miller argues that respect for the "warrior tradition" may have influenced white opinions and allowed Southeastern Indians to claim this rung on the racial hierarchy; however, the connection of Native American ancestry back to origins as Croatan, Lumbee, or other tribal groups was difficult to establish and has not been authenticated

8 "North Carolina," *Southern School News*, October 1, 1954, 11.

for the Goinstown group. Melungeon groups, such as this one in Goinstown, exhibit a variety of appearances, including European, Native American, and black, according to Paul Johnson, president of the Melungeon Heritage Association. They also share many surnames in common through intermarriage and have experienced discrimination because of their ambiguous ethnicity in the eyes of the dominant white culture. According to Louise Nunn, a Columbia University scholar who interviewed members of the Goinstown community and wrote about them in 1937, "In Rockingham County, the attitude of the white race toward the Indian group is not very favorable. The white farmers who live nearest to them are as a whole quite prejudiced against them." Scholar Brewton Berry has called such communities "reluctant Indians." "Most of them would doubtless prefer to be white," he wrote in his study *Almost White* in the 1960s, "but since that goal is beyond their reach, they will settle for Indian."[9]

Because of the ambiguity of their ethnicity, and therefore their status, the Goinstown community had its own small one-teacher school from the early 1900s up to 1955, a part of the Rockingham County school unit, but separate from both blacks and whites. As early as 1903, North Carolina legislation had prohibited any child "with

9 Wright, "Goins School," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, May 21, 1950, 65; Paul Johnson, "Rockingham County's Melungeon Connection" (presentation, Museum and Archives of Rockingham County (MARC), Wentworth, North Carolina, November 17, 2016); Mark Edwin Miller, *Claiming Tribal Identity: The Five Tribes and the Politics of Federal Acknowledgment* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013), 34, 31; Melungeon Heritage Association, *One People, All Colors*, http://melungeon.org/frequently-asked-questions-about-melungeons/ (accessed December 1, 2016); Louise V. Nunn, "A Comparison of the Social Situation of Two Isolated Indian Groups in Northern North Carolina" (master's thesis, Columbia University, May 1937), 35, archived at Bassett Historical Center, Bassett, Virginia; Brewton Berry, *Almost White* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963), 161. Berry quoted in Miller, *Claiming Tribal Identity*, 34. Miller repeats South Carolina segregationist Ben Tillman's explanation of why whites respected Indians more than blacks: They "were too brave to ever consent to be made slaves," Tillman said.

Negro blood, or what is known as Croatan Indian blood, in his veins, however, remote" from attending school with whites. A reference to the Goins school in a 1914 article in the *Reidsville Review* lists it under the heading "Colored." However, in the late 1920s, the Goinstown School enrolled more than eighty students—all with the last names of Goins, Harris, and Hickman, and all listed as "white" on the enrollment cards. There is evidence that at this time, however, their white neighbors and the school authorities considered the Goinstown residents "mulatto," while the citizens themselves claimed to be Indians. Columbia University scholar Nunn found that they "were constantly alert to prevent the school's being classified as Negro." Such a vigilance existed among the Indians of Robeson County in North Carolina as well, where they established "Blood Committees" to make sure no blacks were admitted to their separate schools. Goinstown residents were especially concerned that their sole teacher not be black and "inspected every new teacher . . . for signs of Negro blood." The Rockingham County superintendent at the time, J. E. McLean, however, revealed to Nunn that in addition to Indians from Rockingham and Person Counties, as well as a Cherokee from Oklahoma, "Negroes had taught in the school but that the Indians never found it out."[10]

10 Legislation from 1903 quoted in John E. Batchelor, *Race and Education in North Carolina* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2015), 13; "The County Colored Schools," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, October 16, 1914, Section 1, 4; Goins Indian School, Bob Carter and Laurie McCollum, researchers, Rockingham County Historical Collections, Gerald B. James Library, Rockingham Community College, Wentworth, North Carolina; Nunn, "Two Isolated Indian Groups," 62; Miller, *Claiming Tribal Identity*, 37; State Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Educational Directory of North Carolina, 1937-1938,* Raleigh, North Carolina, 11, North Carolina Digital Collections, Department of Cultural Resources, http://digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm/ref/collection/p249901coll22/id/208088. Indicating the ambiguous status of the students there, the school, located in the Madison district, was identified in the 1914 article as "Goin Race."

In the 1930s, apparently disputes among Goinstown residents resulted in closing the school for the next decade. Nunn describes the group in 1937 as having lost its school and disrupted its church, struggling with "an imperfectly defined local recognition of an Indian status." School records show that in the spring of 1942, after about ten years with no school in Goinstown at all, the matter came before the school board. Prompted by a request from the Junior Service League of Madison, a group of civic-minded women who were typically the wives of prominent white community leaders in the nearby town, the board was asked to look into the situation in Goinstown and get a teacher for the school, which had been "discontinued for a number of years." Writing as secretary for the board, Superintendent J. C. Colley, who had been hired in 1938, explained that the closure was because of an "apparent lack of interest on the part of the patrons." In her analysis from a few years before, however, Nunn asserted that a bitter antagonism between the lighter and darker-skinned members of the community had closed the school. Around 1931, Nunn argued, the "Goinstown School had already collapsed and the Indian group was split wide open internally." "Some members of the group," she wrote, "now claimed to be entirely white in order to repudiate the darker elements." The darker-skinned "in turn insisted they were blood relatives of the rest of the group, and claimed an origin of Indian and white extraction." This conflict kept them from requesting a school of their own. To include the darker-skinned members would risk being designated as a "Negro" school. The result was that there was no school at all in Goinstown from 1931-1943. Nunn found in her research that many children under age twelve had never attended any school. A white school was five miles away but would not accept the

Goinstown students, while a small black school with nineteen students was only two miles distant, "but none of the Indians . . . [would] consider attending it." The fact that some lighter-skinned families moved out and attended white schools was also acknowledged by Superintendent McLean.[11]

The Board discussed the "advisability" of reopening the Goinstown School in August 1942 and decided to investigate. Two months later, led by W. J. Harris, "a delegation of five or six men from the Goins community in the northwestern corner of the county" requested that a school classified as "White-Indian" be opened there. Superintendent Colley agreed to go to Raleigh to meet with State Superintendent Clyde A. Erwin to see if such a classification could be obtained. State laws would not permit the "White-Indian" designation, he learned, since "only one distinct race could use a single school," but Erwin allowed the school to be classified as "Indian." In January 1943, the Board agreed to make necessary repairs to the small frame building to be used, apparently one of the small white schools earlier consolidated and a different one than had been utilized in earlier years. They also set out to "procure an Indian teacher" and to reopen the school for the 1943-44 term. However, in October 1943, the school had not yet been opened and the superintendent reported that he was still working to have a teacher allotted. The Goinstown School disappeared, however, from the board minutes for the duration of World War II and until the next decade. No teachers hired for the school were listed each May, as were those for all of the other schools in the system; no

11 Nunn, "Two Isolated Indian Groups," 4, 63- 65; Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, March 2, 1942.

local community committeemen were appointed, as for each of the white schools in the unit. In this regard, then, the Goinstown School was treated as non-white. The school system ran "Teacher Wanted" ads in the Greensboro newspaper for a week in October 1948, saying that a teacher for the "one-teacher, rural Indian school" was "wanted at once." A suitable teacher was ultimately obtained and students claiming their Indian status enrolled. One report notes that average attendance at the school during the 1940s was twenty-three.[12]

In the midst of the postwar building flurry to consolidate black schools, "extensive" improvements were also made to the Indian school. This project was done, however, only after the Goinstown teacher, Mr. J. Roy Whitt of Danville, Virginia, made a plea to county officials, presenting a rather bleak account of students abandoned in an entirely inadequate building. If the school were to be continued, he urged the drilling of a well to provide running water. Further, he reminded the board that because of their non-white status, students who finished the eighth grade had nowhere to go for schooling beyond that. As had been earlier noted by those writing about the community, "When a pupil 'finished' at Goins School, a decision had to be made that affected his entire future." Some left the state for West Virginia, where they were accepted into public

12 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, August 3, 1942; October 5, 1942; October 26, 1942; January 4, 1943; and October 4, 1943; Rockingham County Schools operating budget as reported in "Historic and Architectural Resources of Rockingham County, North Carolina, ca. 1799-1953," *National Register of Historic Places*, United States Department of the Interior, 82 (2003), http://www.hpo.ncdcr.gov/surveyreports/RockinghamCountySurvey-2003.pdf; "Teacher Wanted" advertisement, *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, October 14, 1948, 23. The ad also ran on October 15, 16, and 18, 1948; see Chapter IV of this dissertation for an explanation of the local school committeemen structure in the Rockingham County system. No black schools were organized with school board appointed local committees until after the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

schools. Most just quit school and went to work. Whitt asked the board to "give them the opportunity of attending high school" near their homes. The principal of the closest white school, H. H. Simpson of Stoneville, urged that the Goins school be "repaired . . . and not discontinued." He "feared that it would not be satisfactory if the pupils now enrolled at the Indian school were absorbed" by his school. The board did agree to renovations that would put the school into the best condition possible, including running water, inside toilets, fresh paint inside and out, and a new floor. They also moved that Goinstown students who satisfactorily completed elementary grades be accepted to Stoneville High School. It is unclear, however, that at this time any students followed through in enrolling in ninth grade at the nearby white school.[13]

After much effort over decades to maintain a separate school for the members of the Goinstown community, the reaction of school officials following the *Brown* decision was to begin plans for integrating the Indian school students into the nearest facility for whites. The Supreme Court mandate was a "big factor" in the reaction of the board, according to their written record, as they acted on what they understood to be an opportunity for the students of Goinstown to claim "whiteness" and assimilate into the white Stoneville school. Before doing so, white female school supervisors visited every home in that community with school-age children and found that the parents were "very dissatisfied" with their one-teacher school and wanted the move. The Board approved the transfer and noted that the teacher allotment, "not the teacher employed last year at

13 Wright, "Goins School," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, May 21, 1950, 65; Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, June 4, 1951.

Goins," was to be added at Stoneville. Accomplished in time for the opening of the 1955-56 school year, officials reported in September that the Goins children were "getting adjusted" and that everything was "running smoothly" at the white school. The Goins School property and building were sold at auction two months later for $2,550 and the proceeds set aside for furniture at a new white primary school across the county. In a matter of months, school officials had reacted to the *Brown* decision with their first act of desegregation, but one not widely publicized and not involving any of the students from the county's three consolidated black schools.[14]

Although not always addressed in civil right studies, the desegregation of "Indian" schools into the dominant white systems across the state was a crucial part of dismantling Jim Crow structures in many areas. Unlike in Rockingham County, *Brown* did not initiate the same kind of reaction of quick integration of those claiming Indian identity in many other North Carolina communities. Of course, in the Robeson County area, Indian schools were long established and served much larger populations than in other parts of the state. Before having achieved state recognition as Croatan Indians in 1885, these groups had shared racial status with blacks and were often referred to as "free colored" or "mulatto," just as those in the isolated Goinstown area of Rockingham County had been. The fact that the Croatans gained federal recognition as Lumbee Indians in 1956, just after the *Brown* decision, also meant that they were more focused on their Native American identity than on claiming "whiteness." In fact, the Lumbees generally opposed

14 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, July 1, 1955; September 19, 1955; and December 5, 1955. It is not clear why the Goinstown teacher was rejected for transfer to the white school.

integration. They were accustomed to leading their own schools, by participating in school committees similar to those of the white Rockingham County system and even hiring their own teachers. Keeping their separate Indian schools was a key factor in maintaining their Indian identity. Such solidarity was not the case in smaller communities such as Goinstown, where the residents took the opportunity to access white identity through integration. Across the state in 1956, there were, besides the thirteen Indian schools with more than two hundred teachers in Robeson County, only twelve other such institutions, including the federal Cherokee school in Swain County, one fewer than the previous year when the Goinstown Indian School had been closed and the roughly forty students integrated into the white school nearby. In response to the mandate of *Brown*, local school leaders, working with Goinstown residents who were able to overcome their long-standing divisions, acted quickly to remove the possibility of these students being stigmatized as black and claimed their status as white.[15]

15 See Batchelor, *Race and Education in North Carolina,* 13, 97-98; Anna Bailey, "'It Is the Center to Which We Should Cling': Indian Schools In Robeson County, North Carolina, 1900-1920," in The History of Discrimination in U.S. Education: Marginality, Agency, and Power*, ed. Eileen H. Tamura* (Palgrave Macmillan, March 2008), 68, 86, Ebook, https://www.palgrave.com/us/book/9780230600430; See "Triracial Segregation in Robeson County," *Learn NC*, North Carolina Digital History, http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-newcentury/5816; Miller, *Claiming Tribal Identity,* 45; *Educational Directory of North Carolina*, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 1955-1956, 38, 60-61, 74-75, and 77, http://digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm/ref/collection/p249901coll22/id/208088; Malinda Maynor Lowery, *Lumbee Indians in the Jim Crow South: Race, Identity, and the Making of a Nation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010). The Indians of Robeson County were identified as "Croatans" in the *1898 Biennial Report of the Superintendent*, Department of Public Instruction, 297, 304. Batchelor, in a reference to a 1903 law and a short discussion of a 1963 Harnett County case, only briefly addresses tri-racial desegregation in his recent work. Bailey explains that, over time, the name "Croatans" became a racial slur, and in 1953, Indians of Robeson County voted to identify as Lumbees.

Agency and Activism

Other than closing the segregated Goinstown School, no racial desegregation in the county's schools took place for the rest of the decade. Education was certainly the most pervasive part of the segregated system, but, of course, there were numerous other aspects of society that meant non-whites in Rockingham County, as elsewhere across the South, were reminded daily of their second-class status. Nearly all articles in the three newspapers in the county identified African Americans by race as "colored," and headlines often focused on race if those involved were black: "Negro Candidate Challenged" or "Negro Bound Over on Likker Charge." Want ads in the local newspapers were constant reminders that certain jobs were for whites only. Blacks were also reminded by ads in nearly every issue that made it clear that only a few units of housing were available for "colored." Even the yearly agricultural fairs that children looked so forward to each fall were advertised in the paper as having separate days for "white children" and "Negro children."[16]

In the face of this discrimination, the various African American communities across the county organized themselves and exhibited strong agency on their own behalf. Separate scout organizations provided opportunities to black youth, as did recreation programs, which were especially strong in the Reidsville area. There, the Lowe Recreation Center provided a full schedule of sports programs for African American young people, including swimming lessons in the summer. In both Reidsville and

16 "Negro Candidate Challenged by Dallas Gwynn," *The* (Madison NC) *Messenger*, April 14, 1955, 1; "Negro Bound over on Likker Charge," *The* (Madison NC) *Messenger*, April 14, 1955, 1; "Want Ads," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, September 8, 1954, 8; September 2, 1957, 8; and October 1, 1958, B5; "Reidsville Fair Opens Sept. 26," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, August 30, 1955, 1.

Leaksville, Negro citizens had their own separate YMCA facilities and movie theaters. The local newspapers even noted that western movie star Sunset Carson had appeared in person at the Booker T. Theater in Reidsville and that a local black family had hosted the white actor in their home. The three hundred-capacity Henry Theater for blacks in Leaksville was operated at first by whites, but after a two-year closure because of lack of revenue during a textile strike, re-opened under black ownership in 1953. The theater was a welcome part of the black business district in Leaksville, and Elizabeth Jumper remembered the pleasant experiences she had working there as a teen. Black farm youth were especially noted for their success in 4H and other pursuits during this period. Under the direction of Negro county agricultural agent, T. D. Williamson, local youth and adults won numerous awards for their livestock and other farm products and worked closely with North Carolina A&T's School of Agriculture. Twelve black home demonstration clubs provided educational opportunities for county citizens. African Americans were full participants in the broader life of the community, heading up fund-raising drives among black residents for charity campaigns. Well-known educators such as C. C. Watkins and E. M. Townes, Jr., the principal of North Scales Street Elementary in Reidsville, often led such efforts.[17]

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17 "McKinney Becomes First Negro Eagle Scout in Council," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, April 19, 1955, 8; "Swimming Important Recreation Program," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, June 10, 1955, 3; "Henry Street YMCA Membership Drive Now in Full Force," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, April 26, 1956, 6; "Colored News," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, January 5, 1951, 8; and January 24, 1955, 8; Frank Williams, Jr., "Frank Talk," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, July 9, 1953; Elizabeth M. Jumper, interview by author, May 24, 2017; "Colored News," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, March 10, 1950, 5; "Farm Youth Attend Banquet at A&T College," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, March 13, 1950, 8; "County-wide Negro Farm Home Meeting Is Held Friday," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, January 18, 1955, 5; "Colored People Asked To Support Drive for March of Dimes Fund," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, January 18, 1950, 2; "E. M. Townes, Jr. To Head Negro Division of UF," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, September 2, 1957, 1. Williams notes that while the *Henry Theater* was closed, parking spaces were set aside at the local drive-in theater to

In some cases, however, black citizens of Rockingham County had to devise plans of their own for essential services. In Madison, for example, the African American community organized some of its own access to health care, arranging for three black doctors to see patients three days a week. With two physicians coming from Martinsville, Virginia, about twenty-five miles away, and another from Greensboro, about the same distance to the south, the trio saw patients at the Gentry building, a place that was the heart of the black community in western Rockingham County. A combination store, barber shop, and general gathering place, Gentry's was identifiable to many because of the huge tree on site. Drivers along the main thoroughfare between the small towns of Madison and Mayodan would have seen numerous cars and patrons there daily. Located centrally to the two primary residential areas of African Americans, Gentry's was within walking distance of most of the towns' black citizens. In addition to setting up access to health care and building strong segregated schools, African Americans in three towns of the county—Madison, Leaksville, and Reidsville—had already established lending libraries of their own—each called the McRae Library. In the 1950s, new books arriving at the Madison McCrae Library, run by Mrs. Nathaniel Scales and housed in her family's business building down the road from Gentry's, were often listed in the local paper. The three black libraries frequently sponsored programs for the community, such as the film series for teens on going steady and personal relationships shown at the Reidsville

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accommodate African Americans. Eagle Scout Walter McKinney was the son of Bobo McKinney, a member of the local NAACP who would sign the petition for immediate desegregation of schools and later become the first black deputy sheriff in the county. See "Negro Appointed Sheriff's Deputy in Rockingham," *The Advisor*, February 1963; and "School Integration Action Demanded: Petition Submitted by Local NAACP President," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, November 9, 1955, 1.

McRae unit. Black churches all over the county also hosted a multitude of meetings and activities that provided support networks for the entire African American community.[18]

In this climate, some Rockingham County African Americans boldly spoke out against segregation, Hodges, the Pearsall Plan, and the Patriots of North Carolina and took actions to break down local Jim Crow structures. One of the most notable voices was that of the Reverend Douglas E. Moore, who came as a new pastor to the St. John's Methodist Church in Leaksville in mid-1954, just after the *Brown* decision was announced. Moore had grown up in Hickory, North Carolina, and attended the North Carolina College in Durham. He started his religious training at Howard University but transferred the next year to the Boston University School of Theology, where he was a classmate of Martin Luther King, Jr. Heavily involved in the United Methodist Conference in North Carolina, a biracial organization that oversaw dozens of churches—black and white—in the state during the mid-1950s, Moore served both as a minister for local churches and as the executive secretary for the organization's education arm. He helped organize a church conference on world affairs in Greensboro in January 1955 and, as a member of the Methodist Conference's Board of World Peace, urged the United States' recognition of Communist China. During the mid-1950s, the young minister taught courses at Bennett and Livingstone colleges and held community Bible studies in

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18 "Colored News," *The* (Madison NC) *Messenger*, October 20, 1955, 15; and October 27, 1955, 11; "McRae Library To Present Program for Teen-Agers," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, June 3, 1955, 8. For more examples of library and church notices see weekly columns "Colored News," *The* (Madison NC) *Messenger*; "Colored News," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*; and "Colored News," *Leaksville* (NC) *News.* The three doctors were Dr. N. N. Jones, a general practitioner from Greensboro, and two physicians from Martinsville, VA, Dr. Cornelius F. Matthews and Dr. Fern M. Georges, a graduate of Howard Medical University. Numerous African American church congregations figured prominently in each community.

Leaksville and other towns in the Piedmont of North Carolina. A month before *Brown*, Moore picketed a concert by the New York Philharmonic being held for an all-white audience at Greensboro's Aycock Auditorium because, as a newspaper account explained, "no tickets were made available for members of his race." Moore later wrote of the incident that the "music company wanted to segregate me and I refused to go anywhere that I am denied full rights."[19]

Moore is best remembered for his role in organizing the Royal Ice Cream sit-in in Durham in 1957, when he led six youths who refused to move to the black side of the ice cream shop. The group was arrested, tried, and found guilty of trespassing. Although recognized as a significant moment of direct action and one of the earliest "sit-ins" in the nation, historian Christina Greene gives a negative assessment of Moore's role in the Royal sit-in, pointing out the ways in which it divided the black community. Moore made many mistakes by acting hastily on his own, Greene argues, without consulting other local leaders, especially women of the community and the editor of the *Carolina Times*, Louis Austin. In fact, Greene writes that Moore "made numerous attempts, most single-handed and all unsuccessful, to desegregate public facilities in Durham" but credits the young minister with fostering enthusiasm and leadership among NAACP

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19 "Conducting Course on Teachings of Jesus," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, August 5, 1954; "Dr. Beach Featured Speaker for Church Conference Here," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, January 28, 1955, 13; "Group Advises Recognition of China," *Greensboro* (N C) *Daily News*, June 18, 1955, 7; "Concert Picketed by Negro Pastor," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, April 10, 1954, 12; "Fellowship Supper," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, October 7, 1954, 23; "Vesper Speaker," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, January 15, 1956, 25; "Changing Sex Code Noted by Minister," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, January 16, 1956, 12; Douglas E. Moore, Letter to Martin Luther King Jr., October 3, 1956, The Martin Luther King Jr. Papers Project, Stanford University, THLS.MLKP-MBU: Box 62, Online King Records Access (OKRA) Database. (accessed January 15, 2017), http://okra.stanford.edu/transcription/document_images/Vol03Scans/393_3-Oct-1956_From%20Douglas%20E%20Moore.pdf.

youth and playing a role in the founding of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in 1960. Historians Thomas Jackson and Taylor Branch both include accounts of Moore's vital role just after the February 1960 Greensboro sit-ins, in promoting the sit-in efforts and nurturing their spread across the state and region. Moore was a dedicated member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Branch asserts, and with James Lawson, was involved in training protesters in non-violent tactics. After the Woolworth sit-ins by the A&T Four and other students, Moore contacted activists all across the region and was a key member of the network that enabled the sit-in movement to be sustained and to spread to other cities. In fact, according to Branch, "Much of the nonviolent activity in the state of North Carolina was traceable to the influence of Douglas Moore."[20]

Before becoming involved in these pivotal incidents in the civil rights movement, however, Moore spent about two years in Rockingham County as a minister and activist. Involved in several acts of resistance, Moore publicly worked on behalf of blacks in the freedom struggle and served as a foil for the work of the segregationist Patriots in the county. A native of North Carolina, but a newcomer to the area, Moore was known for his blunt and sometimes radical statements, many often printed in local newspapers. Just before coming to Leaksville, his words in a January 1954 letter in the *Greensboro Daily News* may have shocked many readers. Going to all-black schools had helped to foster a

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20 Christina Greene, *Our Separate Ways: Women and the Black Freedom Movement in Durham, North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 65, 67, 263 (n); Thomas F. Jackson, *From Civil Rights to Human Rights: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Struggle for Economic Justice* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 112, 116; Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-1963* (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1988), quotation from 260, 273.

hatred of white people in him, he said, but once he studied alongside whites, he changed. Responding to another reader's letter, he wrote that there were many "sensible" reasons for having students of both races going to school together, one being a better understanding of one another. As a religious man, he had converted to the "brotherhood of man." He believed that if black and white children went to school and church together, it would be "possible for them to grow into the Kingdom of God." Claiming the God-given rights of the founding documents, Moore argued that "basic rights are not dependent upon what the majority might think." His theological training was clear as he mused about the marriage of "souls," rather than people of different races. In poetic language, Moore seemed to parallel the noble language of his classmate, Martin Luther King, Jr., "All I desire for my children," he wrote, "is that they be free to attain the highest position in our society, free to eat, sleep, worship, and play wherever they desire."[21]

Addressing him as "Dear King," Moore wrote to his acquaintance shortly after leaving Leaksville to fill him in on the various civil rights activities he had recently been involved in and to prepare King for his upcoming trip to Durham, where Moore was now assigned. "My three years in North Carolina have been interesting," Moore wrote to King. Two of those were spent in in Leaksville, "the Governor's home town." There Moore had been "the most unpopular Methodist preacher in town," he told King,"that is the White people thought so." He had helped form a local chapter of the NAACP, a

21 Douglas E. Moore, "Loving One's Brother," Public Pulse, *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, January 1, 1954, 43.

"voter's league," and "helped the laundry workers organize and go out on strike." The pages of the *Leaksville News* confirmed many of these activities. Moore's ultimate goal in writing the letter to King seems to have been to urge him to help organize a group in the region that would employ "the power of love and non-violence." In this regard, Moore appears to have been a key factor in the formation of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). After praising Dr. King "for the tremendous job" he had done in the Montgomery boycott, Moore recounted several incidents of his own civil disobedience on Virginia and North Carolina buses, tying his personal effort to those of the better-known King. In Newport News, Richmond, Durham, and Asheboro, Moore told King, he had refused to move to the back seats, citing his Christian beliefs in justice and his willingness to die for them. He was eager to use further direct action. "I have maintained for years that one-hundred well disciplined persons could break the back of segregated travel in North Carolina in less than a year," he concluded.[22]

Moore did not mention in his letter to King his freedom struggle work within the Methodist churches he had pastored or that he had often taken to the pages of the regional newspaper as an activist in direct response to the statements of opposition forces in Rockingham County, where he was pastoring a small church in a mill town. While a Leaksville resident, Moore spoke powerfully in a letter to the editor in response to Governor Hodges's "voluntary segregation" speech. "It is unreasonable for Mr. Hodges or anyone else to ask Negroes to accept voluntarily a segregated school system that poisons the minds of God's little children with prejudice," he wrote. "I am not proud of a

22 Moore, Letter to King, October 3, 1956.

dual, wasteful, personality-destroying educational system," he said. Moore, who had come to the county about a year earlier, got specific with local references. "I am not proud of the signs I see in Leaksville or anywhere else in the state that say, 'White Only' or 'Colored Entrance.'" Knowing of the Governor's business ties in Rockingham County, Moore charged Hodges with fighting against a union for his textile employees and asked, "How many qualified Negroes did Mr. Hodges bring into his business organization?"[23]

In mid-1956, the Reverend Moore debated Patriots leader Dallas Gwynn in the pages of the *Greensboro Daily News,* primarily about the NAACP and charges that the organization was a Communist front. Moore first defended the NAACP against the criticisms of North Carolina Governor Hodges, saying, "the NAACP's impressive record of supporting social justice, civil liberties and political democracy" could not be diminished by anything the Governor said. The NAACP had been the "champion of justice when the church, press, and public officials were silent and scared." In an opinion piece in early April, the newspaper editorial board wrote that it was "simply not true that the NAACP is a Communist-inspired organization." Dallas Gwynn challenged this view, using evidence repeated from a speech against the NAACP by Georgia Attorney General Eugene Cook. The Patriots vice-president instead insisted that numerous leaders of the organization had been revealed as subversives or affiliated with Communists—all specifically named and their activities listed in a 121- page transcript from the House Un-

23 Douglas E. Moore, "In Defense of NAACP," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, August 15, 1955, 4.

American Activities Committee. The NAACP, Gwynn charged, was "controlled by a group of the most radical white extremists in America."[24]

The Reverend Moore responded to Gwynn in the strongest way: challenging him to a public debate. Calling Gwynn an "intractable misologist," one who hates reason, Moore clearly attempted to humiliate Gwynn, showing his fallacies in claiming that all of the NAACP members must be Communist if evidence existed that one member had ever been affiliated with them. Gwynn writing as if he were "an authority on Communist front groups," Moore wrote, was "ridiculous." Moore also appealed to Gwynn as a fellow Methodist and challenged the segregationist's Christian values. He asserted that "the church we are both a part of" would support his and the NAACP's stand on segregation, not that of the Patriots. He offered to debate Gwynn "publicly anywhere, before any group," and urged him to accept the challenge as "an honorable Southern gentleman." Gwynn replied a week later with a lengthy defense of his evidence of Communist involvement by the NAACP, repeating the same details he had previously utilized, gleaned from the House Un-American Activities Committee. If none of those named in this evidence was Communist, Gwynn asked, then why had the NAACP not taken the accusers to court? Gwynn also made sure that readers knew that Douglas E. Moore was the "pastor of the Negro Methodist Church and the leader of the local branch of the NAACP in Leaksville." He also relayed the news that Moore had attempted to file

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24 Douglas E. Moore, "In Defense of NAACP," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, August 15, 1955, 4; "Is the NAACP Communist?" *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, April 12, 1956; Dallas E. Gwynn, "Is NAACP Communist?" *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, April 22, 1956, 51. Cook's *The Ugly Truth about the NAACP* was a favored publication disseminated by the White Citizens Councils. See James Graham Cook, *The Segregationists* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1962), 64, 355.

to run for a seat on the Rockingham County Board of Education but had been declared ineligible. Gwynn did not mention, however, that he had been the person challenging Moore's registration in the district and that Moore had been registered in the Leaksville Township but not on the county lists. Moore had asked that his name be removed from the ballot when this discrepancy was explained. Ultimately, the segregationist leader refused to debate Moore, giving a caustic explanation: to accept the challenge would "not be consistent with my known position and efforts to maintain segregation of the races."[25]

One of the last efforts that the Reverend Douglas E. Moore promoted before leaving for his church assignment in Durham was a strike by African American workers at two large laundries in Spray and Leaksville. Earlier advertised as "well-trained, experienced workers," over eighty-five black employees of New System Laundry in Leaksville went on strike on May 22, 1956, and were joined by fifty-five of the one hundred Negro workers at Hatley Laundry a few miles away in Spray the next day. Minister Moore supported the strike, which took place after about two months of attempted labor organizing by the Textile Union Workers of America (TWUA). Before leaving for Durham just days into the strike, Moore insisted that his Leaksville congregation, St. John's United Methodist, officially stand with the strikers. Reportedly, the minister "had the church pass a resolution supporting the Negro laundry worker[s]." The resolution described the strikers as trying to "organize and to bargain for a living wage" and called for the members of the church to boycott the local laundries and "go

25 Douglas E. Moore, "Intractable Misologist," Public Pulse, *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, May 9, 1956, 8; "3 Candidates Are Ruled Ineligible," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, May 4, 1956, 19; "Negro Candidate Challenged by Dallas Gwynn," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, April 26, 1956, 1; Dallas E. Gwynn, "Cook and the NAACP," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, May 15, 1956, 6.

back to the washtub of their grandmothers until justice . . . [was] done." Local union organizer, Charles Auslander, accused the laundries of "paying horribly low wages and giving no job security." Many of the employees were being paid only forty-five to fifty cents an hour, women could at best make an hourly wage of sixty cents, and few males made more than seventy-five cents per hour. None made an hourly wage of $1.00. The TWUA spokesman also accused owner Hatley of keeping his employees from accessing their Christmas savings accounts.[26]

In pushing for the strike and boycott of the laundries, Moore's activism may have gotten out a bit too far in front of the community. The strike intensified racial and political conflicts in the area, and it is not clear whether it resulted in better working conditions or better pay for the laundry workers. With the backing of the union and their insistence on arbitration, strikers picketed outside the laundries for more than ten weeks. However, as the strike stretched across the summer, the laundries managed to stay open. Things turned violent when dynamite was set off in front of the home of one Hatley laundry employee, Sally Scales. The local newspaper was critical of the strikers, calling the strike "a disgrace to the community" and focusing on race as an issue. Union organizer Auslander contended that "this is not a strike of Negroes. Rather, it is a strike of workers seeking justice." But the *Leaksville News* editor countered that race was central, "for it is the average colored worker who will benefit at the cost of the white

26 1937 advertisement for Hatley Laundry & Dry Cleaning Company, http://www.leaksville.com/hatley.htm; "85 Employes [sic] of Laundry Strike," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, May 23, 1956, 6; "Negro Employees at New System Laundry Walk Out on Strike; About 55 Walk Out at Hatley's," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, May 24, 1956, 1; "2nd Laundry in Tri-Cities Hit by Strike," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, May 24, 1956, 16; "St. John's Has New Pastor," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, June 14, 1956, 6; "Two Plants Still Idled by Strikers," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, June 1, 1956, 27.

people of the Tri-Cities. The very same people who will pay the higher laundry costs are the white textile workers who send their clothes to the laundry," he argued. The strike finally sputtered out in August when the two laundries announced that some of the original strikers had returned to work, that they had hired some new workers, and that they now had all the labor they needed for full operation. The strike had begun in the week leading up to the highly contested primary in which the North Carolina Patriots were attacking Congressman Thurmond Chatham for not signing the Southern Manifesto and coincided with a strike at a Leaksville trucking company that also turned violent. Racial tensions were stirred even further as the special election on the Pearsall Plan took place in September.[27]

Just after the series of letters challenging segregation, Douglas Moore's frustrated filing for school board, and the beginning of the African American laundry workers' strike, the fiery young minister was assigned to Asbury Temple Methodist Church in Durham, a small congregation, but located in a city where his activist passions would find more fertile ground. In Durham, Moore, as spokesman for a ministerial alliance there, continued to challenge segregation. He not only led the Royal Ice Cream sit-in and met with King and other black leaders when they came to Durham, but he also called on evangelist Billy Graham to preach against segregation "because he is supposed to be one of our great spiritual leaders" and demanded that the city of Durham desegregate the local

27 "Laundry Strike in Leaksville in 5th Week," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, June 21, 1956, 14; "Charles Auslander Writes His Views about Laundry Strike," *Leaksville* (NC) *News,* June 14, 1956, 5; "Nobody Wins through a Strike," Editorial, *Leaksville* (NC) *News,* June 14, 1956, 1; "Launderies [sic] Now Have All Workers That They Need," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, August 9, 1956, 7; "Driver Cleared of Harming Car of Non-Striker," *Greensboro* (NC) *Record*, June 30, 1956, 26.

public library and theater. Leaksville, with its black population of only about 15 percent and the home of the businessman governor Luther Hodges, who was advocating "voluntary segregation" and the Pearsall Plan, had proven to be rocky soil for a young man intent on making a public stand against segregation.[28]

Moore was certainly one of the loudest voices of activism in Rockingham County, but he, his church members, and the black laundry workers were not the only African Americans pushing for the elimination of Jim Crow there. Three chapters of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) functioned during this era—in Madison, Leaksville, and Reidsville—as key vehicles of black activism. At work in the county on behalf of the 21 percent of the population who were African American, NAACP chapters met in mid-1955, following up on the *Brown II* announcement. Under the leadership of their president John Gentry, the Madison branch gathered "in their meeting room upstairs over Gentry's place," a center for the black community. An NAACP chapter had formed in Madison in 1945, the first branch in the county, and consistently had Saturday suppers, meetings, and conferences throughout the 1950s and 1960s, usually advertised in the local newspaper. Gentry and fellow Madison resident B. A. Franklin were noted as members of the state level Board of Directors on the official letterhead of the organization in 1947. Although Reverend Moore claimed in his letter to Martin Luther King that he had founded a NAACP chapter in Leaksville, records show

28 "Negroes Seek Answer on Segregation Stand," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, May 23, 1957, 6; "Durham Negro Asks Theater Integration," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, May 21, 1957, 6; Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, October 6, 1955; "Opening Day Enrollment Totals 4,160," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, September 6, 1956, 1.

that there had been a branch there since 1949. No doubt, Moore did stir local members to action during his two-year stint in the area, however.[29]

Reidsville had the strongest of the NAACP branches in the county and, in fact, one of the most active chapters in the state. Their local president, the Reverend A. D. Owens, was also a vice-president of the North Carolina state NAACP organization. In Reidsville, a "mass meeting" took place in May 1955 at Zion Baptist Church, a stronghold for African American activism in that community. They heard from Greensboro attorney Herbert Parks, as they anticipated a second ruling on school desegregation. At other times, the Reidsville NAACP branch met at Union Hall, the site for meetings of the Black Tobacco Workers International Union, Local 191, from American Tobacco, where Owens was employed. After a directive from the national organization and state president Kelly Alexander, Sr., to issue petitions calling for the immediate end to segregation in public schools, the Reidsville branch, the only chapter in Rockingham County to bring such a petition, submitted theirs to the local school board on October 15, 1955. This call for immediate desegregation was dismissed by local

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29 "Rockingham County, North Carolina," Social Explorer/US Demography 1790 to present, https://www.socialexplorer.com; "Colored News," *The* (Madison NC) *Messenger*, October 27, 1955, 11; Charles Dyson Rodenbough, ed. *The Heritage of Rockingham County, North Carolina*, Rockingham Historical Society, Inc. (Winston-Salem, NC: Hunter Publishing Co., 1983), 226; Letters from North Carolina Conference of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, August 8, 1947 and August 12, 1947, *Papers of the NAACP,* ProQuest History Vault, Duke University Library, Durham, North Carolina, "Leaksville, 1949-1952," North Carolina, Box II: C137, Part II: Branch File, 1940-1955, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Records, A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC (2010), http://findingaids.loc.gov/db/search/xq/searchMferDsc04.xq?_id=loc.mss.eadmss.ms008007&_start=12279&_lines=125&_q=part+ii+branch+file&_displayTerm=Part+II%3A+Branch+File. The Rodenbough local history collection reports that the Madison chapter of the NAACP was founded in February 1945, and that the grandfather of RaVonda Dalton-Rann, interviewed for this project, Frank Matthew Dalton, Jr., was instrumental in obtaining the charter.

school officials as just the work of the larger organization, similar to those in "various other southern towns as a routine process of [the] NAACP." The petition was, in fact, the same as that presented to other North Carolina school boards, including school officials in Charlotte, but was a first step in a broader campaign against Jim Crow across the state. In Charlotte, Alexander and his wife Margaret led the way, following up on the petition with a request for their seven-year-old son to transfer to a white school for the 1956-1957 school year. Asked to state a specific reason for the transfer, the Alexanders wrote: "It is not a desegregated school." The request was denied. Although it would not be immediate, scores of other black North Carolina parents would follow this path, the NAACP's strategy to counter the state's Pupil Assignment Law, requesting school transfers one family at a time.[30]

The entire text of the Reidsville petition as well as the names and addresses of all forty-eight signers were printed on the front page of the local newspaper in early November 1955 "in order that the citizens of the Reidsville School District might know such a petition had been presented," the local board explained in their minutes. In other locations in the South, such a strategy had been and would be used to silence African

30 "NAACP Rebuffed by State Policy," *Greensboro* (NC) *Record*, August 24, 1955, 3; "Colored News," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, May 5, 1955, 3; August 5, 1955, 3; June 3, 1955, 8; and November 9, 1955, 1; "Petition Asks Reidsville's Integration," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, November 10, 1955, 19; NAACP, "Sample Petition," *Race & Education in Charlotte*, J. Murrey Atkins Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, https://speccollexhibit.omeka.net/items/show/44; Charlotte, North Carolina, School Administrative Unit, "Application for Change of Pupil Assignment," *Race & Education in Charlotte*, J. Murrey Atkins Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, https://speccollexhibit.omeka.net/items/show/44; Herbert Parks was the first African American licensed to practice law in Guilford County and practiced with Henderson and Henderson in Greensboro. See http://www.hendersonandhenderson.com/about_us.htm. The son for whom the Alexanders sought a transfer was Kelly Alexander, Jr., who would go on to be a Representative to the North Carolina General Assembly, and, like his father, state president of the NAACP. See http://www.votekellyalexander.com/meet-kelly.

Americans challenging segregation. The Reidsville board's response to the petition was to appoint the kind of group that had been suggested by Governor Hodges, an Advisory Committee on Education to study problems "which confront[ed] it as a result of recent decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court." Members included two white ministers; Negro supervisor for the county schools, C. C. Watkins; and frequent representative of the black community, Joe Walker. There was no integration in Reidsville as the petition called for then or even two years later in the fall of 1957, as occurred in three other North Carolina cities—Greensboro, Winston-Salem, and Charlotte. Still the local branch of the NAACP would provide consistent and forceful leadership for county residents seeking to dismantle Jim Crow during the entire span of the desegregation era and beyond.[31]

One criticism the local, state, and national NAACP organizations had to weather during these intensifying Cold War years was that they were aligned with Communists. As the series of letters between Dallas Gwynn and the Reverend Douglas E. Moore clearly showed, there was a persistent campaign to link the two. No doubt, such charges were more easily believed in North Carolina during this time because of the arrest, trial, and imprisonment of avowed Communist leader, Junius Scales, and accusations of leftist leanings and Communist involvement against others in the state. In an attempt to stop this association, in May 1957, NAACP national leaders boldly and officially rejected the support of Communists in their freedom struggle. Present at a rally of seven thousand at

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31 "Petition Submitted by Local NAACP President," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, November 9, 1955, 1; Minutes of Reidsville City Schools, November 7, 1955; and November 21, 1955. For more on responses to NAACP petitions for desegregation in the aftermath of *Brown*, see Charles C. Bolton, *The Hardest Deal of All: The Battle over School Integration in Mississippi, 1870-1980* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005), 66-67.

the Lincoln Memorial were A. Philip Randolph, Roy Wilkins, and a young Martin Luther King, Jr. Randolph warned that Communists did not want to solve racial discrimination but only sought to use African Americans to strengthen the Soviet Union. Instead of Communists the NAACP looked for stronger leadership, he said, from the Eisenhower administration, which had been "all too silent and apathetic." On this, the third anniversary of the *Brown* decision, in an attempt to focus civil rights work in the direction of political involvement, King's call was "give us the right to vote."[32]

African Americans in Rockingham County in the 1950s heard this call. Not only were they active in trying to desegregate the schools, but they also worked toward the goal that King had delineated: electoral empowerment. Such a focus was needed to counter the work of the White Citizens' Councils who had clearly stated that one of their goals was to "discourage Negro [voter] registration by every legal means." One of the key strategies of local African Americans was to increase voting by black residents. In 1952, in an early get-out-the-vote drive, an announcement on the front page of *The Messenger* let black residents know that the Drew School would furnish baby sitters for those who wanted to go vote the next Tuesday. During the mid-1950s, several black male leaders ran for office, centered in Reidsville, where African Americans made up 33 percent of the population. In 1954, C. C. Griffin and NAACP president A. D. Owens ran along with ten white candidates for three seats on the Reidsville City Council. Owens finished fifth, showing some voting strength in the black community. Five years later, Ed

32 "Jury Selection Begins," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, April 11, 1955, 1; "Attorney Says Conviction To Be Appealed Promptly," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, April 22, 1955, 1; William Galbraith, "Negroes Reject Communist Aid in Their Civil Rights Fight," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, May 17, 1957, 1.

Roberts, an older member of St. John's Methodist, the church Douglas Moore had pastored, ran as a Republican for the Leaksville town Board of Commissioners. Roberts was not elected, but coming as "somewhat of a surprise to local politicians," he received forty-six votes in a hasty write-in campaign. State NAACP president, Kelly Alexander, called for an immediate voter registration drive at the organization's state convention in 1957. Only 143,000 of the 550,000 eligible black voters in the state were registered, but he encouraged his listeners, "We can get 300,000 on the books by the next election," and send a message to Senator Sam Ervin, who had been vocal in opposing civil rights legislation before Congress.[33]

Precinct organizing, a re-registration requirement, and a subsequent voter drive in 1958 were especially fruitful for African Americans seeking electoral participation in Reidsville. In May 1958, the six city precincts met to organize, and Reidsville's Fourth Precinct, the largest in the city with three thousand plus voters, elected three African Americans to serve on its Democratic Party executive committee. Even though the twenty blacks there outnumbered the six whites, the group still selected a white chairman

33 "'Citizens' Councils' Are Established," *Southern School News*, October 1, 1954; "Drew School To Furnish Baby Sitters for Voters," *The* (Madison NC) *Messenger*, October 30, 1952, 1; The Eighteenth Decennial Census of the United States, Census of Population: 1960, Characteristics of the Population, North Carolina: 1960, Volume 1, Table 21, "Urbanized Areas, and Urban Places of 10,000 or More," 35-61; "Incumbents Win in City Elections Here Saturday," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, May 10, 1954. Campaign ad for C. C. Griffin, *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, May 6, 1954, 7; "Leaksville Negro Receives 46 Write-in Votes in Leaksville Race for Commissioner," *The Advisor*, June 1959, 32; "N.C. Board Files Answer in Suit That May Test State's Placement Statute," *Southern School News*, November 1957, 13. Despite depicting Roberts as having been a worker all his life, nearly four decades with a local grocer, the *Advisor* article went on to include details that may have been intended to lower Roberts in the eyes of the publication's mostly white readership. He had run, the article said, because he felt "colored people should be represented on the board" so that "they could get more favors." He would have gotten more than 46 votes, he is purported to have said, "if his friends knew how to read and write."

and vice-chair. The African Americans could have elected an all-black slate, the new chair told reporters, but chose not to do so. They did not wish to cause any trouble, he said. They just "felt that they should have representation." There was no arguing. "I am sure we will all get along fine," he stressed. At Precinct Three, where seventeen white and six black Democrats attended, there was also some biracial cooperation, as black community leader Joe Wright was named to the precinct committee. The paper reported a "general feeling of good will between both groups."[34]

Later in the year, the county elections director called for a general re-registration of voters because the voter books were literally "about to be used up" and were out of date. He had a plan for a new card system that would be more efficient. This effort gave black voters an opportunity to organize and register, not as a group trying to get into the electoral system, but along with all others in the county. Whites and blacks met separately to learn about the process, but all were told that potential voters had to go to their regular voting places and register on one of the designated Saturdays or they would be "out of luck" on the next voting day. An informational "mass meeting of the colored citizens of Reidsville" was held at the black First Baptist Church. Then to facilitate the process of registration, African Americans organized the Reidsville Registration and Voters Movement Association, led by black physician, Dr. I. H. Perkins. Their efforts paid off. "The Negro citizens of Reidsville . . . have been coming to the voting places and registering with regularity each Saturday morning," the local newspaper told readers.

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34 Frank Warren, "Three Negroes Named to Fourth Precinct Executive Committee," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, May 5, 1958, 1.

A week before the deadline, one registrar sent a warning quoted in the local newspaper that "the whites just aren't coming to register." By the end of October, registration figures were, indeed, significant for African Americans. Reported in the local newspaper by precinct and in detail, one Reidsville precinct had a black majority in registered voters, while in another whites numbered 1,026 and blacks 700. With an estimated 90 percent of eligible voters registered countywide, African Americans in the Reidsville area were poised to exercise greater participation in electoral politics.[35]

Opportunities

Confident that a good number of white Americans would accept the Supreme Court's authority and realize the moral truths of the cause, NAACP attorney Thurgood Marshall was quite optimistic as the *Brown* ruling was handed down that segregation could be eliminated across the country in "up to five years." During the subsequent years of the 1950s, however, many blacks were less sure and continued to build their own communities in the face of continued racial discrimination. In some black households, the court's ruling was not even discussed. Gloria Purcell, who was a junior at the black Douglass High School in Leaksville in 1954, does not recall even a mention of *Brown* by her parents. She does, however, remember the enthusiasm of her community, Blue

35 "Rockingham Set To Re-Register for First Time in Over 50 Years," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review,* October 10, 1958, 5; "Negro Voters Association To Meet Friday," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, October 23, 1958, B1; "Negro Voters Will Discuss Candidates at Friday Meeting," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, October 30, 1958, B5; "Saturday Is Final Day for County Re-Registration," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, October 24, 1958, 1; "County-Wide Registration Figures," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, October 30, 1958, A3. There were two churches named "First Baptist" in Reidsville—one white and one black. For an examination of the importance of electoral politics in the black freedom struggle, see Steven F. Lawson, *Running for Freedom: Civil Rights and Black Politics in America since 1941*, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 1997).

Creek, for its elementary school and the fervor with which parents, students, and teachers alike took pride in Douglass. Many local parents seized opportunities in the aftermath of *Brown* to continue to improve the education of their children, even as they remained in a segregated system. After all, as Governor Luther Hodges in his so-called campaign for moderation had made clear, in order to maintain a program of "voluntary segregation," "truly equal" school facilities would be required. "We cannot . . . expect Negro parents to be willing to send their children to dilapidated and unsanitary school buildings," Hodges had told legislators.[36]

Having the nation's highest court behind them, well-organized black PTA committees and other associations put a newfound leverage to work. They continued to seek equitable division of local resources for their segregated schools and often petitioned school board members for financial contributions for programs and repairs. In early 1955, when a committee led by Joe Wright from Reidsville's black Booker T. Washington School asked the school board to find the funds to relieve crowded conditions in all the community's schools, they were informed that architects were present at the meeting and plans were already underway for additions to the high school. The next year Wright appeared again before the board with a check paying for an activity bus for the black schools and requesting that the board provide a garage for its storage. Another delegation from Washington School came to the board in February 1958 to discuss their school's needs. Even though it did not coincide with what is generally called the period of

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36 Thurgood Marshall quoted in James T. Patterson, Brown v. Board of Education*: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 71; Gloria Purcell, interview by author, February 24, 2017; "Hodges Says 'Truly Equal' School Facilities Needed," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, August 2, 1956, B1.

"equalization" just after World War II, there was another flurry of building and repairs in African American schools across the county following *Brown*. An eight-room addition to Douglass School in Leaksville was completed in mid-1955, costing more than $115,000. After a "gymtorium" was completed in 1955 at Charles Drew School in Madison, a $40,000 vocational department was approved for the school in 1959 and home economics was added to the curriculum. Of course, building projects proceeded at numerous white schools in the county as well. Both Madison Elementary and Madison High School were renovated at mid-decade. By 1957, a new white consolidated high school for Madison and Mayodan was in the works, as was a new high school for white students in Reidsville. At Wentworth High School in the county system, plans were put in place in 1960 for a five-room addition to house home economics, science, and agriculture.[37]

One particular request brought to the Leaksville Board in 1958 helps us see the complexity of these early years of the civil rights movement and understand that the black community was not monolithic in their resolve to have desegregated schools. Although in the preceding three years, *Brown* had been a watershed moment for African Americans, the Montgomery Bus Boycott had been successful, and the federal government had intervened to protect black students entering school in Little Rock, not

37 Minutes of Reidsville City Schools, March 7, 1955; January 5, 1956; and February 3, 1958; "Reidsville City Schools Open September 6," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, August 26, 1955, 1; "Eight-Room Building To Be Used As School," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, June 24, 1955, 3; Minutes of Madison City Schools, February 1, 1954; June 7, 1954; November 16, 1954; and November 28, 1955; "County Schools Open," *The Advisor*, September 1959, 41; "Baptist Pastor To Speak at Episcopal Lenten Event," *Greensboro* (NC) *Record*, March 16, 1960, 12; "Wentworth Gets Addition to Court House; Addition to School Planned," *The Advisor*, February 1960. The Leaksville school's addition was meant to provide space needed since the consolidation of the small Blue Creek and Sunshine African American elementary schools with Douglass. By August 1955, construction of a vocational building and two classrooms for Booker T. Washington High School was fully underway. In *The Hardest Deal of All,* Charles Bolton documents equalization efforts in Mississippi continuing into the late 1960s.

everyone of color was demanding integrated schools. In fact, one group of black citizens from the Blue Creek section of Spray wanted their small segregated neighborhood school back, though in a new building instead of the outdated one that had been closed three years earlier. Led by their spokeswoman, Maxine Moorehead, the group explained why they wanted an elementary school for grades one through five "to take care of colored children in the Blue Creek, Moir Town and Draper area." They were "proud of Douglass," where now all African American pupils in grades 1-12 attended, she said, but parents were concerned that small children and high school-aged students were all together in one facility. Being all on one campus also meant that bus routes were longer and lunch times were later. The smaller children needed their own school. Apparently thinking of the Rosenwald school model, what Moorehead recommended was an eight-teacher school in a location closer to where most black elementary students lived. This school would be small, but the district had a similarly sized white school—North Spray Elementary—with only 137 students enrolled. Why could the board not consider building this school instead of a new elementary school for white children in the Central Area? In fact, as Moorehead knew, the Leaksville board had already purchased land for a new white elementary near their state-of-the-art Tri-Cities High School facility. Moorehead told the Board frankly that she did not "like the idea of a new school" for white children, while black children had to "leave home early in the morning and go the distance to Douglass," which was located on the western outskirts of town. As board member Harry Davis explained to Moorehead, what she and the Blue Creek Committee

requested was "taking a backward step of 25 to 30 years. The trend now is to consolidate. A small school will deprive the child of best advantages."[38]

This response was backed up by a report from Superintendent John Hough on the "trend toward larger schools" and by a letter from the principal of Douglass, "Professor Ellerbe," outlining the advantages of a larger school. Members of the board further assured the Blue Creek petitioners that they were "interested in the best educational opportunities for their children" and that additions or even a new school were possibilities at the Douglass site. "This seemed to please the committee," Superintendent Hough wrote in the minutes. The meeting ended with the chairman, Zell Ford, thanking the Blue Creek Committee for coming and stating that "the Board wants to do what it can for both races of children." The Board placed additions at Douglass School, "our Douglass School project," as their number one building priority. Three months later Principal W. C. Ellerbe reported on the plans for his school and "was careful to thank the Board for the proposed building" and "expressed a sincere feeling that his people . . . [were] well satisfied." Only six months after the Blue Creek Committee's appearance requesting a new elementary school, the Board "agreed for the people in the Blue Creek Negro community to use *our* Blue Creek site" [emphasis mine] for neighborhood activities. Small schools like Blue Creek that were closed as African American facilities consolidated often had been central to community gatherings. The people who had helped build it with the assistance of Rosenwald funds had been schooled at this site for generations and had put much of their own effort into maintaining it. Now they had to

38 Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, May 16, 1955; October 13, 1958; and December 19, 1958.

request permission to be on the grounds. The response to *Brown* in the Leaksville school district had so far been on white terms.[39]

In the aftermath of *Brown*, African Americans across Rockingham County sought to continue their school traditions and showed pride in many of their academic and performance programs. The mid-1950s were, in many ways, a heyday for the black schools of Rockingham County. All three black high schools in the county boasted outstanding music programs and continued to nurture student musicians. They also had many connections to area black colleges. The Drew band from Madison had a close relationship with Winston-Salem Teachers College. Many bands from North Carolina black high schools played at college parades, but the Drew fifty-piece band under director James R. Potts was among the few invited to play at halftime of the college's football games. Local black students in the 1950s also excelled academically. The outstanding speller from the Madison-Mayodan schools in 1959 came from the black Charles Drew School. Not only did Lena Tatum out-spell all the students in her own school and defeat the champion spellers from the white schools in her system, but she also placed second in the annual regional bee sponsored by the Winston-Salem newspaper. On many levels, black students demonstrated that consolidating white and African American schools would not be a matter of accepting lower achievement levels in black schools, as some opponents of desegregation argued.[40]

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39 Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, December 19, 1958; February 9, 1959; and March 11, 1959; Fisk University Rosenwald Fund Card File Database, http://rosenwald.fisk.edu.

40 "Drew Band To Play at Game Saturday," *The* (Madison NC) *Messenger*, November 10, 1955, 3; "Lena Tatum," *The Advisor*, June 1959, 14.

Overall, a little more than half of all Americans supported *Brown* upon its announcement in May 1954. Historian Michael J. Klarman, however, argues that the Supreme Court justices who decided *Brown* felt that they were "working with, not against, the current of history." In 1954, better-educated citizens tended to support *Brown*. Almost three-fourths of college graduates (73 percent) approved of the ruling to eliminate racial segregation in schools, while only 45 percent of those with less than a high school education did so. In the Rockingham County area, whites who spoke out and acted against segregation were largely the college-educated: ministers, journalists, and a few school officials. Historian William Chafe has argued that across the state a "substantial body of evidence suggests that [Governor Luther] Hodges could have found as much support for compliance as for resistance." This support could be seen in several statements from denominational leaders in a number of North Carolina churches. The North Carolina Council of Churches and the state's United Methodist Church both gave vigorous endorsements of *Brown*. Presbyterians voted "in favor of ending segregation," a decision that was not binding on its individual congregations, but one "believed likely to win gradual local conformity." North Carolina Episcopalians, in a meeting of both white and black congregations, also voted for a very gradual elimination of segregation. To seek a quick solution to the problem would be "unrealistic," they explained. Even progressive leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention supported the Supreme Court's *Brown* decision. L. L. Carpenter, the editor of the North Carolina Baptists' primary publication, *The Biblical Recorder*, wrote many articles urging the state's Baptists, of which there were more than seventy-four hundred in Rockingham County, to accept the

ruling. The decision was "almost inevitable in the light of Christian truth, the claims of democracy, and the demands of the world situation," he told his fellow Baptists. Local churches debated their stands related to the statements of their denominations. Ministers were risking their pastorates if they got too far out in front of their congregations on race issues. Still, there was some movement among white church people toward acceptance of racial change. In early 1955, the Reidsville First Methodist Church hosted a speech by Charlotte civil rights activist and editor, Harry Golden, during their observance of Brotherhood Week. Also in Reidsville, the white ministerial association began to meet quarterly with African American counterparts, the Reidsville Ministerial Alliance. In coming years, other religious and human relations groups would form in the county to facilitate desegregation.[41]

While across the South white politicians vowed resistance, in the county next door to Rockingham, Greensboro school leaders, in contrast, seemed to meet *Brown* with some enthusiasm, affirming on the very evening the unanimous decision was announced that they hoped to "lead the way" and "pledged action to implement the ruling." The first Southern school system to do so, the Greensboro board voted six to one to comply, with

41 Michael J. Klarman, Brown v. Board of Education *and the Civil Rights Movement* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 77, 75; William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 59; Mark Newman, "The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina of North Carolina and Desegregation, 1945-1980," *North Carolina Historical Review*, 75, no. 1 (January 1988): 4, 10, 11; "Presbyterian Union Voted," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, June 1, 1954; "Episcopalians Urge Gradual Race Study," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, May 10, 1956, 1; "Dan Valley Association Has Good Record for Year," *Biblical Recorder,* October 29, 1955, 8; "Golden To Speak at Brotherhood Dinner Thursday," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, February 21, 1955, 3; "New Chairmen Appointed by Ministerial Association," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review,* May 9, 1955, 3. For an account of Golden's civil rights activism, see Kimberly Marlowe Hartnett, *Carolina Israelite: How Harry Golden Made Us Care about Jews, the South, and Civil Rights* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

one of the six voting in the affirmative being an African American who had been elected to the board. The chairman stated: "We must not fight or attempt to circumvent this decision," and the board directed their superintendent to study the "means for complying with the Court's decision."[42]

This attitude may not have been as clearly seen in Rockingham County, but early responses to *Brown* seemed to indicate some willingness to comply gradually with the decision. "Reidsvillians appeared to be accepting the Supreme Court's abolition of the 'separate but equal' doctrine," the local newspaper reported, "in a sober and thoughtful manner." In the western part of Rockingham County, only twenty-five miles north of Greensboro on Highway 220, school and community leaders had more of a "Greensboro" reaction to *Brown* than did other areas of their county. The Madison City Board of Education issued a policy statement regarding race at the first meeting after the *Brown* decision that, although it did not propose to desegregate schools, did show some consideration of local African Americans and respect for the authority of the Supreme Court: "The Madison Board of Education will do or say nothing that will alienate the Negro community," they promised, and "will abide by the law." Requesting the "superintendent and the principal of the Negro school to do all they can to maintain [the] status quo," the Board, nevertheless, affirmed key roles for both their young, newly hired superintendent, V. Mayo Bundy, and the leader of the black schools, John W. Dillard, working together in the situation. Dillard was the key representative of the black

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42 Arthur Johnsey, "School Segregation Banned: Effect Delayed for Further Study," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News,* May 18, 1954, 1; Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights,* 6; Patterson, Brown v. Board of Education: *A Civil Rights Milestone*, 72; "North Carolina," *Southern School News*, September 3, 1954, 10.

population of western Rockingham County for over thirty years. Further, the Madison school board clearly cooperated with these two men in the coming years to put in place some policies that led to some incremental desegregation.[43]

This openness to gradual change was due to a combination of factors, but primarily because of the combined progressive leadership of Dillard and the Madison school superintendent Bundy, who demonstrated throughout his tenure a sensitivity to racial inequities beyond those of his contemporaries in the other three school units in the county. According to historian Michael McElreath in his study of several school districts in central North Carolina, the single most important factor in integrating public schools was local leadership. "Absent strong pro-integration leadership from the state level," he argues, "desegregation's success depended on the quality of local leaders." There is evidence that Superintendent Bundy of the Madison-Mayodan City Schools provided such leadership. Bundy saw desegregation as a "positive change" rather than a "negative obligation" and worked quietly, but actively, to prepare the community for what was to come. Like the white Southern leaders examined in William Chafe's *Civilities and Civil Rights* who sought to maintain "civility," Bundy also was likely driven by an "attitude of community responsibility toward the Negro." Nevertheless, the superintendent did not seek to manipulate the desegregation process on white terms only, as Chafe charges Greensboro leaders did. Instead, he operated over nearly two decades to foster an environment in which school integration could successfully take place, seeking the

43 "Supreme Court Decision Accepted Here in Sober and Thoughtful Manner," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review,* May 18, 1954, 1; Eudoxia Dalton, interview by author, January 6, 2010; Minutes of Madison City Schools, June 7, 1954.

counsel of outside educational experts, making himself visible at black school events and at black churches, and quietly consulting with black leaders. It was even the impression of then school board member Donald Stilwell that Bundy, in cooperation with Dillard, the longtime principal of the black high school, "engineered" school desegregation in Madison-Mayodan, the only unit in the county to eliminate the dual, segregated system by the fall of 1968.[44]

In the Madison District, the smallest of the four school units in the county, Bundy took over for the aging J. C. Lassiter, who had overseen the local schools for nearly forty years. The new superintendent came to the area recently trained in the master's program in educational history and practices at UNC-Chapel Hill and with an awareness of racial issues. One of Bundy's first initiatives was to seek the merger of the black and white teachers' organizations. In 1953, the Madison City Board of Education granted the superintendent "authority to conduct local professional meetings on an integrated basis." A secret ballot was held among teachers, and with only three negative votes, the measure passed. The Madison City Schools then went over the head of the North Carolina Education Association, which forbade black members, by seeking and receiving a charter in 1954 from the National Education Association to include all professional personnel in one organization. The two faculties continued to meet together for the next decade and there was some limited integration of the teaching staffs in the early 1960s. Seeing opportunities to make some progress toward desegregation, Bundy and other school

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44 J. Michael McElreath, "The Cost of Opportunity: School Desegregation's Complicated Calculus in North Carolina," in *With All Deliberate Speed: Implementing Brown v. Board of Education*, eds. Brian J. Daugherity and Charles C. Bolton (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2008), 24, 23; Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*, 8; Donald Stilwell, interview by author, October 30, 2009.

leaders in the Madison District made incremental efforts to place teachers where they were needed, not dependent on race. The first step toward faculty integration in the district came in September 1958 when the Board "employed a white speech and hearing therapist to teach students of both races" and announced in the local papers that Mrs. Clay McCollum had been hired "to introduce speech therapy to the local schools."[45]

The Madison school board and superintendent took a second early step in 1955 that indicated willingness to redress racial segregation when they attempted to appoint an African American, Nathaniel Scales, to their Board of Education. At the time, no blacks served on any of the four district school boards nor had any been appointed to any of the local school committees maintained by the county system. At the request of a Drew School PTA committee, Scales, an African American businessman and a longtime supporter of education, was, in fact, selected for the board. Even though the Rockingham Board minutes noted that "the Madison Board has the authority to replace" a member, to accomplish Scales's appointment, Madison leaders had to go to the county trustees, who oversaw the other three boards, for approval. Superintendent Bundy, chairman Dalton L. McMichael, and other Madison board members presented their request in December 1955. Despite their submission of the name of Nathaniel Scales to replace J. O. Manuel as a member, the county took no action. Bundy later explained that Scales had a heart attack and died before being sworn in. It is not clear what other factors may have

45 Minutes of Madison City Schools, July 9, 1953; and August 2, 1954; V. Mayo Bundy, "An Analysis of Desegregation Activities Carried Out under Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in Eight Selected North Carolina Administrative School Units, 1960-1968" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1970), 107-108; "School Teacher Assignments Given: Only One Vacancy," *The* (Madison NC) *Messenger*, August 14, 1958, 1.

prevented a follow-up appointment of another African American to the board from being made, however.[46]

The decision to put Scales on the Madison board was supported by the local newspaper editors, Russell and Mimi Spear, who wrote an editorial, "Toward Fairer Representation," in their weekly publication, *The Messenger*, explaining to their readers the process and rationale for this move. The board, understanding that they were themselves "appointed to serve the best interests of all the children in our schools" had been discussing this issue "for some time" and were unanimous in their opinion that a black should join them in overseeing the local schools. A third of the children attending school in the Madison district were African American, Russell Spear reminded readers, and the school board were all doing an "honest creditable job" in discussing such a move. "In view of the recent rulings handed down by the U. S. Supreme Court," it seemed reasonable to "make a definite start" toward addressing their mandate.[47]

The following week *The Messenger* staff received a two-sentence notice from Patriot leader Dallas Gwynn cancelling any further advertising in the Spears' paper for the Leaksville Drive-In theater, which Gwynn managed. The first sentence stopped advertising and the second noted that the *Messenger* had published an editorial "favoring the appointment of a negro to the Madison School Board." The Spears wrote back that they were sorry that Gwynn had "permitted his prejudice to interfere with his business

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46 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, August 2, 1954; and December 5, 1955; Minutes of Madison City Schools, October 3, 1955; and January 5, 1956; Russell Spear, "Toward Fairer Representation," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, December 3, 1955, 4; Bundy, "An Analysis of Desegregation Activities," 108.

47 Russell Spear, "Toward Fairer Representation," *The* (Madison NC) *Messenger*, December 3, 1955, 4.

relations." This reply spurred Gwynn to write a "blast" in return, a long tirade that he dared the Spears to publish. They did so the following week. Even though Gwynn snarkily denied cancelling his theater's ads in retaliation for their stand on race (maybe the two ideas had been "in the same letter by coincidence"), he clearly had. He especially reacted to the use of the word "prejudice" in their reply. "Let me remind you that Race consciousness is not Race prejudice," Gwynn wrote. "It is a deeply ingrained awareness of a birthright held in trust for posterity." He was stunned that newspapers like theirs "display a groveling, submissive obedience" to the Supreme Court's ruling, which he called "stupid" and "malicious" and part of a Communist plot to "cause confusion and disorder." "People," like the Spears, "who really believe in integration and mongrelization," Gwynn suggested, "should display their 'sincerity' by inviting Negro men into their homes and encouraging them to marry their sisters and daughters," Gwynn concluded.[48]

Because of their stand on racial equity in their community, the Spears lost an advertising account, no doubt of some importance to editors of a small weekly trying to maintain financial stability for their family and employees, but they did not diverge from their insistence on the essential morality of the black freedom struggle. Before *Brown* they had published several statements revealing their views and arguing for better treatment of African Americans and interracial cooperation. A 1952 commentary "Striking at Prejudice" reported on the presentation given by a white principal to the Madison Rotary Club. Howard Simpson had asked the white men present to ask

48 "Letter Box," *The* (Madison NC) *Messenger,* December 15, 1955, 4.

themselves, “Why am I better than a Negro? Am I a better lawyer than Judge William Hastie? Can I sing better than Lena Horne? . . . Am I a better surgeon than Dr. Charles R. Drew?” Russell Spear related the message of the speech and added that Simpson “hit upon a problem in American life which is attracting more sympathetic attention as time passes.” Black Americans were rightfully throwing off their bonds and claiming their positions as citizens “with other free men in a free society.” The next week, Miss M. L. Fulton, chairperson of the Social Studies Department at Charles Drew School, wrote a letter to the editor thanking Spear for this “splendid article.” The newspaper had clearly become a vehicle for reasoned expression on the subjects of prejudice and civil rights. During tense moments when either race could have reacted swiftly in anger or with violence, the Spears issued calming messages in their editorials. In 1953, the home of a much-respected black family burned down, and accusations were raised about the white firemen not responding quickly enough and with too little water and effort to subdue the flames. The Spears called for community-wide support for the Scales family, “help for a friend,” while at the same time explaining the reality of the situation, that, indeed, hydrants were in place in the black neighborhood and that white firemen had acted with integrity, using their best judgment to avoid “the seething mass of heat” spreading to nearby homes.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the editorial page of the *Messenger* contained an almost weekly call for improved race relations, more equitable treatment of African Americans, and the removal of barriers to black advancement. Unlike most of the state's newspapers that endorsed the Pearsall Plan of 1956, journalist Mimi Spear called instead

for readers to study the plan and to consider what it might "mean to the future of the educational system in this state." Acknowledging that the legislature and Governor Luther Hodges, from nearby Leaksville, had already made up their minds to pass the plan, she called the legislation a "complicated set-up calculated to comply with and at the same time side-step the Supreme Court decision on integration in public schools." Before they voted to approve the Pearsall Plan, she said, "North Carolinians are going to have some thinking to do." Her position was that the complex legislation, clearly proposed to delay indefinitely school desegregation, was potentially damaging for all. Continued segregation under this plan might even result in the closing of the state public school system. As analyzed earlier in this dissertation, the Pearsall Plan crafted by a committee headed by businessman Thomas J. Pearsall of Rocky Mount, was intended to decentralize control of pupil assignment. Its segregationist measures put this power in the hands of local boards so that the cases of every single black student who asked for a transfer to a white school would potentially have to be considered by the courts individually. The plan also proposed vouchers from state or local public funds "to pay for private schooling should a student be assigned against his will to an integrated school" and gave local communities the authority to decide whether to close schools rather than desegregate. Although in the mid-1950s the Spears included a variety of reprinted commentaries from other newspapers urging caution in preceding with the desegregation mandate of *Brown* and espousing the wisdom of not pushing the South

"too soon or too fast," the *Messenger* consistently endorsed progress toward an integrated society, especially in the schools.[49]

As soon as he arrived in Madison, school superintendent Bundy began to utilize the local press to his advantage and work cooperatively with Russell and Mimi Spear to get good news about the schools out to western Rockingham County. In August of 1953, the new superintendent stated that he intended to consult with the school board, teachers, and parents before making any changes, and "when these changes are made they will be made public through the columns of *The Messenger*," he guaranteed. Like most small-town papers in North Carolina and the other two publications in the county, *The Messenger* gave the local schools maximum coverage, with every single teacher who worked for the district listed at the beginning of each school year and new hires featured with biographies and head shots. But *The Messenger* went further in working with Superintendent Bundy to inform the public about the schools. The newspaper gave him a weekly venue for explaining his views of society and effective schools, all of which championed equity of opportunity and academic freedom. During his first two years as head of the district's schools, he wrote a regular column titled "Know Your Schools," in which he explained budget calculations, the course selection and the grading system for

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49 David S. Cecelski, *Along Freedom Road: Hyde County, North Carolina, and the Fate of Black Schools in the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 26; "History of the North Carolina State Board of Education," North Carolina State Board of Education, http://www.ncpublicschools.org/stateboard/about/history/chapters/three; Davison M. Douglas, *Reading, Writing, and Race: The Desegregation of the Charlotte Schools* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 29-34; Mimi Spear, "No Time for Indifference," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger,* July 19, 1956, 4; Ransome Ellis Holcombe, "A Desegregation Study of Public Schools in North Carolina" (PhD diss., East Tennessee State University, 1985), 77. In September 1956, a majority of voters in every one of the one hundred North Carolina counties, in the largest voter turnout for a special election in the state's history, voted for the amendments that made the Pearsall Plan law; it passed almost five-to-one.

high schools, and the functioning of extracurricular activities. Each principal in the system, including John W. Dillard of the black Charles Drew School, also each took a turn with an article. The newspaper publishers welcomed Bundy's presence on their pages, especially during the desegregation process. Every change that inched the school system forward or that might be greeted by the community with skepticism or reluctance was explained in advance in *The Messenger*. One of the Spears was at almost every school board meeting from the 1950s on. Working with black educators, a cooperative school board, and local journalists, Bundy prepared the community for the eventual elimination of a segregated school system. In the western part of Rockingham County, then, there was a small, but focused, coalition of white moderates and black leadership in the mid-1950s that stood ready to work together toward desegregation.

In Rockingham County, the issue of school desegregation certainly offered opportunities for resistance, but in the aftermath of *Brown*, there were also moments of bold civil rights activism as well. The three years following the *Brown* decision were crucial in determining the trajectory of efforts to break down Jim Crow as communities had to work out the process locally, whether through adjustment to new expectations, outspoken activism, or by seizing opportunities. Clearly identifiable pockets of support for compliance emerged. Some school board members and other education leaders seemed ready to meet the Court’s expectations with gradual adjustments in their policies. Several religious denominations attempted to guide their congregations with statements of Christian acceptance for desegregation. Strong black leadership, especially in the Reidsville area, resulted in a clear stand for desegregation and increased electoral

participation. African Americans, although their response was not a monolithic affirmation of the NAACP petition of 1955, certainly did not work against that leadership. Those who enjoyed a positive workplace and decent wages in one of the mills of the county (and may have been risking that status with vocal calls for desegregation) may not have been overtly pushing for the breakdown of Jim Crow; however, African Americans in the county overall welcomed efforts to remove the stigma of racial segregation. Integration was not necessarily the most desired outcome, a former teacher in the Madison schools explained, but to "prove that we were not inferior, that we deserved the same things" were the goals that meant the most in this part of the struggle. As one Greensboro civil rights participant later explained to an interviewer, the resistance that came from state leaders just after the *Brown* decision was key in turning so many in North Carolina against compliance. The passage of the Pearsall Plan was "so sad," she said, "because we possibly could have moved ahead right then before the opposition got so firm." Ultimately, that period passed when much of the county and state were poised to accept, even if reluctantly, the authority of the Supreme Court and move toward gradual compliance. With some support from white allies as well as strong NAACP leadership, but primarily because of their own agency, the black community in Rockingham County would continue to make some progress in their freedom struggle in coming years. However, going forward, because of legislation and maneuvering at both the state and local level, the onus of school desegregation would be borne mainly by the activism of black families who would make the hard decision to challenge the system and send their children to all-white schools. Many of these children and their parents would

experience trauma in attempting to first break down the system of segregated schools and then more broadly dismantle a culture of apartheid that existed in the county, as it did nearly everywhere in the South.[50]

50 Eudoxia Dalton, interview; Evelyn Troxler, interview by William H. Chafe, unknown date, *Civil Rights Greensboro Digital Archive Project*, William Henry Chafe History Collection, University of North Carolina Greensboro, http://libcdm1.uncg.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/CivilRights/id/782/rec/3.

CHAPTER VII

KNOCKING ON JIM CROW'S DOOR: DESEGREGATION EFFORTS IN ROCKINGHAM COUNTY, 1958-1966

If desegregation continued at the same pace as it had since the 1954 *Brown* decision, one author noted in 1962, it would take 7,288 years to accomplish the goal of eliminating the dual school systems divided by race. Linda Brown, nine years old when the suit was brought on her behalf, was in 1962, nineteen years old and in her second year as a college student studying music in Topeka, Kansas. In that year, as students left for summer break, only 0.1 percent of African American students in ten states of the former Confederacy attended desegregated schools. Only 203 students (0.061 percent) of the more than 330,000 black pupils in North Carolina attended school with whites. In Rockingham County, although seven African Americans had requested re-assignment, no students had crossed the color line to transfer schools since the Indian youth of the Goinstown community in the mid-1950s. Clearly, "deliberate speed" meant to most of the whites who controlled public education in the South "as slowly as they could" and, to some, that they need "never" comply with the Supreme Court's mandate. Besides, the pupil assignment plans, such as those imposed by North Carolina, had not been deemed unacceptable by the courts and were working as intended, resulting in what Martin Luther King, Jr. called "deliberate delay." Still, as he wrote in *Why We Can't Wait*, the court could not have meant that "another century should be allowed to unfold" before black

Americans should gain the "educational opportunity and moral freedom" of integrated schools. "Democracy must press ahead," urged King.[1]

This "pressing ahead" in democratizing education fell to black families, who brought challenges to the existing structure that mandated division by race. No re-assignments of African American students took place in Rockingham County in the fall of 1957, as they did in the cities of Winston-Salem, Charlotte, and Greensboro. Still, in the early 1960s, the county received individual placement applications and a group of student transfer requests that led to a federal suit supported by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). In the western part of the county, the first black student to attend a local white high school was part of a plan devised by the white superintendent and black leadership in that community. As seen earlier, each school unit in Rockingham County defined its transfer policies, following the lead of state officials who sought to delay and possibly evade desegregation entirely with their Pupil Assignment Plan. The policy was an extremely effective way of defying the *Brown* decision. It required the families of every single student seeking to transfer to a white school to submit applications, follow ambiguous calendars for doing so, and then continue the process through board hearings if denied. This process meant that class

1 James Graham Cook, *The Segregationists* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1962), 3; "Linda Brown, Lawsuit Girl, Enters College," *Southern School News* (Nashville, TN: Southern Education Reporting Service), October 1961, 16; Martin Luther King, Jr., *Why We Can't Wait* (New York: Signet Classics, Penguin Group, 1964), 5, 6. Minutes of the four school boards in Rockingham County—Leaksville Township, Rockingham County, Madison-Mayodan City, and Reidsville City—reveal seven African American requests for re-assignment to all-white schools in 1960-1961, but none were yet approved in 1962. Writing of the 9 percent of blacks in the South attending desegregated schools in 1963, King estimated that if this pace continued, integration would take place in about ninety years—in 2054.

action suits in the courts were very difficult to bring and that the school desegregation process would make only very gradual progress. The burden of dismantling Jim Crow discrimination in the schools might become a lengthy, trying process impeded by local and state officials. As a University of North Carolina law professor noted in 1961, "A Negro parent seeking to assert his child's constitutional rights . . . must have unlimited courage, resources, time, and energy" to bring re-assignment requests to the local board and, if denied, move on through litigation in the courts. In addition to the barriers set up in this plan, other serious white resistance to desegregation continued throughout the 1960s in Rockingham County, culminating in a significant Ku Klux Klan presence. These resistance measures, however, were countered by the actions of black students and their families, as well as coalitions of a variety of community members—educators, journalists, business leaders, clergy, and political activists—all attempting to "work out locally" foundational changes to the county's racial framework.[2]

The first transfer request of any African American student in the county came to the rural school board in April 1960. In the wake of that spring's student sit-in activism in nearby Greensboro and in other North Carolina cities, Dr. and Mrs. I. H. Perkins of Reidsville submitted a written application asking that their young son be able to attend the school closest to his home, the all-white Wentworth Elementary School. Dr. Perkins, who had practiced medicine in the county for ten years, and his wife, Willie, who had taught English at two black high schools in the county, had initiated their request with a

2 Daniel H. Pollitt, "Equal Protection in Public Education: 1954-61," *American Association of University Professors Bulletin* 47 (1961), 205. Quoted in J. Kenneth Morland, *Token Desegregation and Beyond* (Atlanta, GA: Southern Regional Council, 1963), 2.

March 1 letter asking for an application form. They assured the school board that they were acting independently, having "received no encouragement from anyone." Dr. Perkins even stated that he would not "consider any court action" if the request were denied and asked that no publicity be given their application. Students such as the Perkins child just entering first grade might have argued that the state's plan regarding transfers did not apply to them, since they had never been assigned to any school, white or black. However, the main reasons for their request, Dr. Perkins told the board, were concerns about the distance to Lincoln Elementary, the "regular colored school," ten miles away and the prospect of placing their young son on a bus to go there. Despite the desire for no publicity of their transfer application, the Perkins request did appear in the papers. One local publication seemed to question why the family would not want their son to attend all-black Lincoln, emphasizing that its facilities were "completely new and modern in every respect." The Board delayed action on the Perkins request but denied it at their next monthly meeting, citing their concern that "at the present time" it would not be "in the best interest of Dr. Perkins's son, as well as the Wentworth School" to assign him to the all-white institution. Dr. Perkins then immediately submitted a request that his son be allowed to leave the county district and be assigned to Branch Street Elementary, an all-black school in the Reidsville unit, which the Board approved. In this May 1960 meeting, after dealing with the Perkins matter, the county board then perfunctorily handled the rest of the pupil assignments in their accustomed way by approving that all others be assigned "to the proper school" as recommended by system principals. Similar

statements and identical patterns of school assignment were seen in the actions of other school boards in the county.[3]

Dr. and Mrs. Perkins emerged in the vanguard of African American leadership in the area. Mrs. Perkins would be among the first African American educators in the county to teach classes to white high school students as a member of an integrated faculty. As the president of the Rockingham County Improvement League, Dr. Perkins had been instrumental in the successful voter registration drive and Reidsville precinct organization in 1957. Just a month before bringing the attendance request to county officials, Dr. Perkins had filed to run for a seat on this same board of education. In seeking office, Perkins, who had earned two master's degrees and a Ph.D. from the University of Kansas and his medical degree from Howard University, said that he believed he could be "a distinctive asset" to the county. A sample ballot for this election in a local news publication listed "I" for incumbent or "R" for Republican by some candidates' names, but "Negro" in parenthesis after Dr. Perkins's name. Although he finished last among the board candidates in the May primary, Perkins garnered more than

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3 "Negro Applies for Admission to Wentworth School," *The Advisor*, May 1960, 38, 41; Minutes of Madison City Schools, May 28, 1958; *The Pioneer*, Yearbook of Booker T. Washington High School (1951), 22, Digital NC, https://library.digitalnc.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/yearbooks/id/8390/rec/1; "Reidsville Negro Physician Files Application To Enter Son at Wentworth School," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, April 1960, in Frances Motley Scrapbook Collection, Microfilm, Rockingham County Historical Collections, Gerald B. James Library, Rockingham Community College, Wentworth, North Carolina; Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, April 4, 1960; May 9, 1960; and September 6, 1962; Minutes of Reidsville City Schools, May 8, 1961; Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, May 9, 1960. Mrs. Perkins was also hired to teach at Lincoln School in September 1962. Copies of the *Reidsville Review* are not available on microfilm from 1959 to 1970. One explanation for their disappearance is that a fire at the newspaper office destroyed copies of the newspaper for these eleven years before they were microfilmed for archives. The Motley Scrapbook, which contains many *Review* clippings from these years, has been microfilmed, but articles are not identified by date or page number.

twenty-two hundred votes across the county. Also indicating that Reidsville continued as a center of African American activism in the county, in the same spring 1960 election, Albert H. Clark, the son of a local physician and a co-manager of a black funeral home, ran for Reidsville City Council.[4]

Perkins and Clark were attempting to claim a political role for African Americans in the area but were faced with the reality of local racial politics, which divided Rockingham County. The rise of what we know as modern Southern conservatism can be traced to this era of desegregation, and the shift in political party loyalty that accompanied the movement could be seen locally. Turning on Luther Hodges and other Democratic leaders in the state, whom they blamed for allowing the token integration of schools, beginning in the fall of 1957, the segregationist North Carolina Patriots organization supported I. Beverly Lake for governor in 1960. During this time, Jesse Helms, who had had a role in the bitter 1950 Willis Smith campaign and would become United States Senator and the leading conservative in North Carolina politics, became "fully aligned with white resisters of integration," according to a comprehensive biography by William Link, and was often in touch "off the record" during these years with segregationist groups such as the White Citizens' Council and the North Carolina Defenders of States' Rights, the second incarnation of the Patriots. About this time, the White Patriots of North Carolina were reorganizing themselves with some new leadership

4 "Faculty," *The Falcon*, Yearbook for Madison-Mayodan High School (1967), 20; "Negro Files for County School Board," *The Advisor*, April 1960, 30, 32; "Official Democratic Vote by Precincts in Rockingham County," *The Advisor*, July 1960, 2-3; "Democratic and Republican Candidates for County Offices," 25, 41; and "Candidates for Reidsville City Council," *The Advisor*, May 1960, 30-31, 39.

and a new name. Again, Dallas Gwynn of Leaksville served as state vice-president, but the top position was filled by the Reverend James P. Dees, rector of Trinity Episcopal Church in Statesville, North Carolina. Dees had made his views clear: "The birds segregate. The animals segregate. And God created the races to segregate." Hired by the state of Alabama to write a study on biology and race, former North Carolina Patriots president and retired University of North Carolina anatomy professor Dr. Wesley Critz George, however, was still exerting influence. His report released to incoming governor George Wallace in October 1962 concluded that "Negroes are intellectually inferior to whites."[5] In his continued efforts to avoid some violent confrontation that would mar North Carolina's image in the press, Rockingham County native Governor Luther Hodges adjusted his rhetoric. After some limited school desegregation occurred, he talked less about voluntary segregation to avoid the race mixing that would prompt whites to abandon the public schools and much more about black illegitimacy, crime, and delinquency. The new segregationist argument centered on the fear that going to school with blacks would lower not only educational, but also moral standards for all. In fact, historian Anders Walker has asserted that "moderates" like Hodges, though they might have helped avoid violent incidents of white resistance to school integration, had slowed

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5 "I. B. Lake Supported for Post," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, March 23, 1958, A16; "N.C. Authorities Crack Down on Klan Activity," *Southern School News*, April 1958, 6; William A. Link, *Righteous Warrior: Jesse Helms and the Rise of Modern Conservatism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2008), 54-55; "Defenders Are Headed by Dees," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, January 11, 1959, 9; Cook, *The Segregationists*, 223; see Cook chapter titled "The Crusaders" for a profile of Dees, 222-28; *The Citizens Council* 4, nos. 7-9, April-June 1959; 4, no. 11, August 1959, University of Mississippi Libraries Digital Collections, http://clio.lib.olemiss.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/citizens/id/1950/rec/1; "N.C. Assembly Approves Referendum on Tuition, School Closing," *Southern School News*, August 1956, 16; "State Sponsored Study Calls Negro Intellectually Inferior," *Southern School News*, November 1962, 11.

desegregation efforts substantially and negatively influenced white school administrators' approaches toward African American students with this emphasis on "black shortcomings."[6]

The I. Beverly Lake-Terry Sanford primary in Rockingham County helps make clear the racial politics of the area in the early 1960s. Since nearly all state and local officeholders were Democrats in 1960, the real competition for North Carolina governor that year took place during the May primary. There were four candidates in the race, but the contest really centered on two—Lake and Sanford. Their runoff clearly reflected the divisions in the Democratic Party because of the intensity of race issues, with Sanford being perceived as more open to desegregation. Both men had their local supporters and campaign leaders in the county, men of some status—a mayor, a county commissioner, businessmen, bankers, and attorneys, one a recent "Young Man of the Year." Sanford's campaign in Rockingham County was led by Allen H. Gwyn, Jr., who practiced in Reidsville with his brother Julius (Jule). Both were white moderates, Duke Law School graduates, and sons of a prominent judge. Jule became a city councilman in 1960 and then mayor of Reidsville in 1962 and led the city and surrounding area through a very tense period. Dallas Gwynn, the segregationist leader who had resisted school desegregation in the state and county so loudly as Vice-President of the North Carolina

6 Anders Walker, *The Ghost of Jim Crow: How Southern Moderates Used* Brown v. Board of Education *to Stall Civil Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 50; W. A. Hildebrand, "Integration in Virginia Analyzed," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, February 8, 1959, C14; Burke Davis, "Negro Boys To Remain in Custody," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, January 13, 1959, 5. In the famous North Carolina "kissing case," of two young African American boys charged with forcing a seven-year-old white girl to give them a kiss, the judge deemed it was better for the boys to stay in the training school than return home where one of their mothers had "several illegitimate children."

Patriots, was Lake's campaign manager in the Leaksville-Spray area. Also among Lake's supporters was Patriot and school board member Paul Hastings, his campaign chief in Reidsville. Fighting the "mixing of the races in the schools" was still the "gospel" that Lake preached in "every campaign speech." A month before the 1960 Democratic primary, more than two hundred attended a Lake rally in Wentworth, the county seat of Rockingham. There, supporters heard Lake once again pronounce his absolute opposition to the NAACP and vow to defeat it. He framed each recent court case brought by the NAACP as an "all-out attack to compel the complete intermingling" of the races and condemned the organization as the "enemy."[7]

Sanford, on the other hand, at first attempted to avoid race issues. He portrayed himself to county voters as "The Man on the Go for the State on the Go" and promoted his goals of getting the state "off the bottom on education and earnings." To win in North Carolina, however, Sanford ultimately had to deny that he in any way supported desegregation. In Rockingham County, he placed a runoff campaign ad saying as much. Stating unequivocally, "Terry Sanford is against integration," the ad went on to claim that a vote for Lake was a vote in defiance of the Supreme Court and for massive resistance that had "resulted in disaster" in other southern states. Voters were urged to support Sanford and "Keep the Federal Courts and U.S. Troops Out of North Carolina." While Sanford garnered about three hundred more votes than Lake in the first primary, largely

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7 "Gwyn Appointed Sanford's Campaign Manager in County," *The Advisor*, April 1960, 9; Julius J. Gwyn, "Reidsville, NC: Establishing Civil Rights Without Chaos or Violence," Rockingham County Historical Collections, Gerald B. James Library, Rockingham Community College, Wentworth, NC, 8, 15; "Around 200 Attend Lake Rally at Wentworth," *The Advisor*, May 1960, 35, 42; "Lake's Campaign Managers in Rockingham County," *The Advisor*, May 1960, 15; "Johnson Heads Sanford's Campaign," *The Advisor*, May 1960, 25.

on the tallies in Reidsville and the western precincts of Madison and Mayodan, Lake carried the county in the runoff. County press coverage may have alerted Lake voters to potential black support for his opponent. Before the second vote, a local publication ran an article pointing out to local readers that "the Negro vote" in the first primary went heavily for Sanford in the three cities of Greensboro, Raleigh, and Winston-Salem. Another article noted that "Sanford received a large vote in the heavy populated Negro precincts" in Rockingham County also but mused that the black vote had likely been larger than usual because "a Negro physician, Dr. I. H. Perkins" had been on the ballot. "They are not expected to turn out in great numbers for the run-off," it concluded. As anticipated, Lake won the Rockingham County run-off by more than twelve hundred votes but lost statewide to Sanford, the state's next governor. The strong vote for segregationist Lake indicated that, as the new decade lay ahead, the county was significantly divided by issues of race and was still heavily influenced by vocal segregationists.[8]

In this contested political climate, the first African American students and their families brought transfer requests to all-white schools in the Reidsville district in the summer of 1961. One high school pupil and five elementary students—Charlotte Irene

8 "Vote for Terry Sanford Ad," *The Advisor*, July 1960, inside cover; "Vote for Better Schools, Not Closed Schools!" *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, June 1960, Frances Motley Scrapbook Collection; "Official Democratic Vote by Precincts in Rockingham County," *The Advisor*, July 1960, 2-3; "Sanford Given Negro Vote," *The Advisor*, July 1960, 8; "Lake Calls for Second Primary: June 25 Election Expected To Be Hot in Rockingham," *The Advisor*, July 1960, 14; "Lake Carries Rockingham County," *The Advisor*, August 1960, 11; "Candidates for Governor Map Plans for November," *The Advisor*, August 1960, 9. Lake won eleven of seventeen precincts, with a final tally of 5,337 to 4,130 over Sanford in Rockingham County. Statewide Sanford won the Democratic nomination for governor 352,114 to 275,905.

Bell, Earl Ray Pass, Herbert Ziglar, Jr., Omah Basal Thomas, Jacqueline Brezetta Crisp, and Donald Lee Crisp—applied for re-assignment to white schools nearer to their homes than the segregated black schools they then attended. All six requests were unanimously rejected by the Reidsville School Board, each with the identical rationale: "After careful consideration of the application and the reason for which it was submitted, the Board agreed that there was no evidence which indicated that the best interest of the child would be served by the re-assignment." System Superintendent C. C. Lipscomb informed the Board that of the six requests only the Bell family had procured applications directly from his office. Twelve other application forms for assignment changes, however, had been obtained by the Rev. A. D. Logan. No doubt anticipating legal action, at this same meeting the Board hired William McLeod to serve as their attorney. Following the grievance procedures mandated by state law, the families of all six students subsequently requested local hearings to appeal the Board's decision.[9]

The hearings that followed in August 1961 provide numerous insights into the workings of the state Pupil Assignment Plan, as school officials, African American families, and NAACP representatives negotiated new territory in Reidsville's desegregation process. Each of the five families was assigned a thirty-minute window in which to present their case to the board; all were represented at the school board hearings by young NAACP attorney J. Kenneth Lee. Lee had only a few years earlier been a plaintiff himself, represented by Thurgood Marshall, in the case that had integrated the University of North Carolina Law School. He certainly understood that challenges to Jim

9 Minutes of Reidsville City Schools, July 10, 1961; and July 31, 1961.

Crow discrimination would not be welcomed. Retaliation for his civil rights activism came early in Lee's career. In 1958, Greensboro Klansmen Clyde Webster and Roscoe Ward were convicted of "smashing the windows" at a barbershop and at an office where Lee worked on behalf of the NAACP. One of Lee's early segregation cases was that of the five black elementary children who sought to obtain transfers to the all-white Greensboro schools. He subsequently served as counsel for the five Reidsville families and dozens of other African Americans in the 1960s and after. At his death, he was called "a quiet force in the nation's fight for equality." In 1961, however, the mere use of the Pupil Assignment process and then the courts to request the transfer of African American children to white schools near their homes did not seem quiet at all; instead, it was met with a mixture of reluctant acceptance, evasive tactics, and outright resistance in Rockingham County.[10]

The first hearing before the Reidsville Board of Education was that of Herbert Ziglar, Jr., whose name would be attached to the case's title in subsequent litigation as the lead plaintiff. The child was a six-year-old, about to enter school for the first time in the fall. Attorney Lee maintained that the Ziglar request was not for re-assignment but for initial enrollment at the nearest elementary school, the white South End School only a half block from his home. The Board responded that if the child and his family had had any previous contact at all with the African American Branch Street School, which they acknowledged, then they would consider the Ziglar request a re-assignment. Lee argued

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10 Minutes of Reidsville City Schools, July 31, 1961; and August 14, 1961; "North Carolina," *Southern School News*, October 1958, 13; Nancy McLaughlin, "Renowned Civil Rights Attorney Dies at 94," *Greensboro* (NC) *News and Record*, July 24, 2018, A1, A5; Michael Newton and Judy Ann Newton, The Ku Klux Klan: An Encyclopedia (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1991), 598-99.

that the Pearsall Plan, which the Board said it was following in assigning pupils, had no provision for placing students entering first grade who had never attended any public school. When Lee questioned the Board about their procedure for enrolling such students, he was told that the Reidsville district used pre-school clinics, about which parents were informed by teachers and administrators at the appropriate school. How, asked Lee, would a child and his family know which pre-school clinic to attend? Was this based on race? "Did a white child apply to the nearest white school," he wondered, "and a Negro child apply to the nearest Negro school?" If so, then this process was discriminatory, and the Board was applying the law unconstitutionally. The Ziglar child lived two miles from the nearest black school, a distance for which his parents would have to make transportation arrangements since there was no bus service in the city. To send the child to Branch Street, while another elementary school was "right there within a half block of his residence" was a "tremendous disadvantage," Lee concluded.[11]

The Crisp children—Jacqueline and Donald—lived with their mother and grandfather in the same block as the Ziglar family and presented the same argument for attendance at South End Elementary: it was by far the closest school to the home of the two young children, who would be in the second and fifth grades. The Board, however, made several very personal inquiries into family relationships, apparently in an attempt to clarify where and with whom the children lived. Personal questions, some with the child removed from the room, were also asked of Mrs. and Mrs. Robert Rudd, the guardians of Omah Basal Thomas. The eleven-year-old child of Mrs. Rudd's sister, Omah had lived

11 Minutes of Reidsville City Schools, August 14, 1961.

with the Rudds in the same block as the Ziglar and Crisp families since he "was about one year old." His mother was deceased, and his father was in prison. The Board expressed concern about the Thomas child's adjustment to the white school considering these circumstances, which were known to the larger community. The fifth elementary student, fourth-grader Earl Ray Pass, lived in the northern part of Reidsville and was requesting reassignment from North Scales Street School to North End School. Again, one reason for the transfer, as explained by attorney Lee, was distance. The black school to which he was assigned was about six or seven blocks from his home, while the white elementary was only about a block and a half, albeit to be reached following a path through an open field. In addition, as with the other requests, Lee argued, "We think the child is entitled to the type of education he seeks" in a desegregated school. "He would learn much more," Mrs. Pass, Earl's mother, added. The final request came from high school student Charlotte Irene Bell, who sought to transfer to the newly constructed white Reidsville High School from Booker T. Washington. The reasons for her request included "the closeness of the school, the convenience of the parents, and the fact that the parents of the child feel their education would be more complete in this integrated school." One of five children in her family, Charlotte was the only sibling asking for reassignment, one of her main reasons being because her current bus transportation involved traveling a long route to pick up students at black schools farther from her home. If she could attend the white high school, her travel time would be cut in half.[12]

12 Minutes of Reidsville City Schools, August 14, 1961. The spelling of the name of Omah Basal Thomas in the board hearing minutes changed to Omat Bosal Thomas in the federal court filings.

Ten days later, all six re-assignment applications were denied, five unanimously. The Ziglar request, however, received two votes for approval. The school board retained legal counsel at a fee of $50 per month, and the students continued in their segregated schools for the 1961-1962 term. President of the Reidsville branch of the NAACP, J. A. Griggs, brother of the Booker T. Washington High School principal, H. K. Griggs, defended the quality of the "local Negro schools" in a statement to the press but also speculated that the students would appeal for legal assistance through his organization. More than a year later in November 1962, having exhausted all the local measures available to them (as required by the North Carolina Pupil Assignment law), four Reidsville students, with the support of the NAACP, ultimately followed through by filing suit in the U.S. Middle District Court. The complaint was a class action suit that accused the school board of "using the Pupil Assignment Act to maintain segregation in the schools." Citing a recent U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals decision that local boards in Caswell County and Durham had, in fact, acted inappropriately in similar matters, the Reidsville students charged that, in violation of their Constitutional rights, the local school board had denied all African American transfers to an all-white facility. The courts agreed and this action placed the Reidsville school system under court supervision for the rest of the decade. As the *Ziglar et al.* case moved through the federal courts, the Reidsville school board made adjustments. Special maintenance attention was given to the black elementary North Scales Street School and early plans were made to build an entirely new elementary school for African Americans. As a response to the claims of families about the hardships of getting their children to assigned schools, the

Board also sought to purchase a bus "for the purpose of transporting certain students who reside in the city." This addition could head off other applications of black children wanting to enroll at white schools because of distance.[13]

January 1963, however, marked a turning point in the desegregation of schools in Rockingham County. Two of the four students involved in the federal suit were admitted to white schools. Herbert Ziglar, Jr. was transferred to South End Elementary and Earl Ray Pass to North End. Omat Bosal Thomas and Lillian Bell, the sister of Charlotte, who had made the original application, were denied reassignment. As the two young students, Ziglar and Pass, transferred mid-school year, local accounts reported that they "were integrated into two previously all-white schools without incident." School Superintendent C. C. Lipscomb informed the public that when their parents brought the boys, now in the second and fifth grades, to school, "there was no fanfare, fuss, or unfriendliness" and "we expect none." As might have been expected, the enrollment of the two Reidsville elementary students spurred other African Americans to seek re-assignment. Interestingly, the first of these in Rockingham County was a single request in the rural school unit. The parents of Eugene Koger, another young child just entering first grade in the fall, asked that he be able to attend the white Monroeton School in the center of the county very near his home, rather than the Roosevelt School for African

13 Minutes of Reidsville City Schools, August 24, 1961; February 12, 1962; March 12, 1962; and January 10, 1963; "Assignment Changes Denied," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, September 7, 1961, 12; "Negroes Attack Use of State Assignment Law in Reidsville," *Southern School News*, December 1962, 6; "Reidsville Faces Suit on Schools," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, December 1, 1962, 9. After they "discussed at length" the requests, the Reidsville Board, with Chairman Charles H. McKinney abstaining, voted 5-0 on all except that of Herbert Ziglar, Jr. Regarding that application, members J. B. Balsley, Jr. and Dr. C. H. Moricle voted to allow it. Three of the students dropped their transfer efforts, while Lillian Bell, the sibling of Charlotte Bell (who had graduated from high school), joined the suit.

Americans south of Reidsville. The Rockingham School Board very quietly approved Koger's re-assignment along with a mix of other applications from all over the district, an action that seemed to go unnoticed by local media. In Reidsville, two dozen additional African American students applied that summer for reassignment in the next school year. All were approved, except one, with no reason listed for the denial. Having received this large group of applications and then subsequent requests from four of the group for a return to their former all-black schools, the Board decided to simplify the process and drop their requirement of notary certification on transfer forms.[14]

The process became still more complicated for school administration, however, in September 1963, when the attorney for the Board presented them with an order from the Federal Court of the Middle District requiring that they prepare a broad plan for desegregating the Reidsville public schools that was acceptable to the plaintiffs' legal counsel. Clearly, the path forward now for the Reidsville school board was not just a matter of making their own local decisions. Yet, under these new circumstances, the Board continued to issue almost identical pupil assignment declarations. Their first "Proposed Plan for Desegregation" submitted to the court asserted that their intended manner of assigning pupils would be done "without regard to race or color" but still

14 Minutes of Reidsville City Schools, January 10, 1963; June 17, 1963; and August 12, 1963; "Schools Accept Two Negroes at Reidsville," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, January 17, 1963, 11; "Two Negro Children Enrolled at Reidsville," *Winston-Salem* (NC) *Journal*, January 18, 1963, 6; Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, July 1, 1963. Thomas's request was rejected based on the fact that he had sought enrollment at South End Elementary. Since he now was a seventh grader and the requested school had only grades one through six, his application was denied. Lillian Bell had not previously entered a request with the local school board. The Monroeton School was the same facility held up as exemplary of how modern white schools were in comparison to rural black schoolhouses in the 1944 thesis by J. C. Colley, (see Chapter IV of this dissertation).

maintained the authority of the Board to decide on placements "to insure the orderly and efficient operation of the school system." Claiming essentially the same segregated path, the Board also specified that students completing their elementary or junior high schooling would be promoted to the school "which pupils have formerly attended who were being promoted to a higher grade." In the midst of this increased scrutiny, the Reidsville Board also moved ahead with plans for a new black elementary school to replace North Scales.[15]

Even while token desegregation was underway, school officials across Rockingham County continued to deal with the demands of operating four separate geographical school systems, all divided by race. Equalization efforts continued, but some projects suggested that the inequality of resources and facilities continued. In Reidsville, new courses in advanced arithmetic and distributive education, business skills, and marketing were added at the white Reidsville High School, while black students across town were offered new classes in the manual labor skills of brick laying and carpentry. Physical renovations at the white Franklin Street Elementary School in Reidsville were completed—a cafeteria, office, and six classrooms. In the Leaksville district, a number of building projects and improvements—all at white facilities—had been completed by the beginning of the 1959 school year. Totaling $1.3 million, these included further enhancements to sports venues, a new classroom wing, and an auditorium at Morehead High School, as well as two new elementary schools for white

15 Minutes of Reidsville City Schools, October 14, 1963; October 22, 1963; December 6, 1963; and January 13, 1964. The new black elementary school would be located next to the Booker T. Washington facility and named Moss Street.

children. In the rural county school district, maintenance facilities and a new gymnasium for the white Stoneville School were nearing completion and several new classrooms at four other schools were planned. For African American students, two new classrooms for Lincoln School in the county unit, a $40,000 vocational department at Charles Drew High School in Madison, and additions to the Booker T. Washington School in Reidsville were in the works. In two areas of the county, white citizens were constructing highly anticipated high schools for their communities. Groundbreaking for an expansive new high school for whites in Reidsville took place in May 1960. Located near the Pennrose Country Club, whose members expressed some concern about potential congestion in the area, the school was dedicated in November 1961, just weeks after the denial of the six Reidsville transfers. In Madison-Mayodan, construction was beginning on the new $866,000 consolidated white high school. The concept of building a high school for western Rockingham County "sometime in the future" had first been brought before the county board by Mayodan committeeman, Ben Archer, in April 1955. The new school could serve white students in all the areas of western Rockingham County, he said. Ultimately, the merger of schools would involve the two small towns of Madison and Mayodan and the countryside around them, removing Mayodan from the county system. The two towns were similar in size and their city limits joined; they would share the new high school facility but maintain separate city services, police departments, public

libraries, and post offices for many decades. The site selected was one quite near the black Charles Drew School, which was only a few years old itself.[16]

The proximity of these white and African American high schools no doubt facilitated the first transfer of a black student in the western Rockingham County area, which took place in September 1963, as an outgrowth of cooperative planning and policy implementation by the Superintendent and the black community. As the LeSueur family approached the school to enroll daughter Patsy in an advanced English class for the "academically talented," they could hear jeers. All along the string of windows at the front of the white high school, eyes peered out as LeSueur and her parents drove up the drive and stopped to allow the honor student to enter the school for her first class. Several carloads of young white men were circling the school, and a number were gathered threateningly across the road. Patsy's mother, Savannah LeSueur, a native of Rockingham County and a teacher at the local black high school, recalled that a huge open area across from the school seemed to be filled with cars, with scores of whites sitting on them, awaiting her family's arrival. When they saw the LeSueur car enter the high school property, a group of young whites approached the entrance. Met by the high

16 "County Schools Open," *The Advisor*, September 1959, 40-41; Minutes of Reidsville City Schools, January 5, 1959; May 4, 1959; January 4, 1960; February 13, 1961; and March 13, 1961; Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, April 4, 1955; April 1, 1957; May 6, 1957; April 8, 1958; July 7, 1958; and August 5, 1958; The Eighteenth Decennial Census of the United States, Census of Population: 1960, Characteristics of the Population, North Carolina: 1960, Volume 1, Part 35, Table 23, "Places of 1,000 to 2,500," 35-68. Stoneville, about eight miles away from the towns of Madison and Mayodan, voted to stay in the county system. In 1960, the population of Madison was 1,912 while Mayodan tallied 2,366 residents. Although planners desired a large auditorium for the new Reidsville High School, it was not a part of the initial building phase. Not until the mid-1970s would the campus eventually boast a spacious auditorium with an orchestra pit and a balcony, the largest such facility in the county. See Joe McNulty, "County To Consider Auditorium Funds," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, May 2, 1972, 19; and Glenn Mays, "Bids Opened on Auditorium," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, January 26, 1973, 25.

school principal, a former Marine, they reluctantly moved back across the road while mother and daughter entered the building. Patsy, a senior at Charles Drew School located a few yards away, whose IQ range and grades would be published in the local newspaper to prove her academic ability and worth to attend the advanced class, was the first African American to walk into a classroom at the all-white Madison-Mayodan High School. It was nine years after the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* that schools segregated by race were inherently "unequal," but this attempt was the first to integrate any classes in the community. Because she had spent much of her teen years in white communities in Pennsylvania as her mother studied at Penn State, Patsy did not anticipate the response. "It wasn't until later," she recalled, "when I found out there had been phone calls to our home and Daddy had a gun under the front car seat that I realized the seriousness."[17]

The reaction at the school and in the community was mixed. The Superintendent V. Mayo Bundy had tried to prepare the Senior Class for this development and had called them to the auditorium in the days before LeSueur's enrollment. As he explained that an African American would be attending classes on campus, one senior male rose and marched out of the auditorium. The student subsequently left the school and enrolled at a smaller rural segregated high school nearby, a classmate recalled. The superintendent

17 Savannah LeSueur, interview by author, January 29, 2010; Inherently "unequal" quoted from *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954) (USSC+). Supreme Court of the United States. Warren, C. J., Opinion of the Court. Argued December 9, 1952; Reargued December 8, 1953; Decided May 17, 1954, http://supct.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/historics/USSC_CR_0347_0483_ZO.html; "Negro Girl Admitted to M-M High," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger,* September 19, 1963; "Five Drew Seniors Get Scholarships," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger,* June 4, 1964; David M. Spear, *Playing with Dynamite: The Story of One Newspaper Family in the South* (Frankfort, KY: Gnomon Press, 2016), 132-33.

was keenly interested in initiating desegregation but was also focused on keeping the process quiet and smooth. He approached local journalists to get their cooperation. "Bundy was quite a shrewd man and he knew that he would have to have the support of the newspaper," explained the editor's son David Spear. "My father was a very well educated New Englander and about as progressive and liberal as he could be. He had been chomping at the bit to get integration moving." However, concerned that their presence at the high school might encourage opposition to "act" for the camera, the Spears agreed to Bundy's request to stay away from the school on September 16, 1963. David Spear recalled:

> The day Patsy LeSueur went to M-M, beforehand, Bundy came to the *Messenger* office and asked me and my dad not to show up. He thought the press would "stir up trouble" and it would be best to stay away, but report it on the basis of interviews after the fact. My father agreed, but I remember feeling at the time, that this was not such a good idea. After all, the point of a newspaper or the role is to put clarity or transparency on events as they unfold. That day, we stayed at the office and that afternoon Bundy came by the paper and reported on what had happened.

The Spears wrote their front-page story on the incident from Bundy's account, but after that day, wrote articles based on their own firsthand observations. "Reporting before, during, and after that period is by today's standards mild, maybe cautious," David Spear said.

> My father was a Yankee and he felt the pressure of Southern conservatives, but he wanted for follow his heart. I remember one editorial he wrote, in favor of

> integration, a very mild piece, so incensed . . . a local grocer, that he threw all the *Messenger*s in his store into the street and stomped on them.[18]

In spite of "many ugly, anonymous phone calls" to the school superintendent and the principal and an unusually large number of protest student absences for a few days following this act of racial integration, Patsy LeSueur would continue to attend the special senior English class at the white high school during the 1963-64 school year and earn a scholarship to attend UNC-Chapel Hill. An honor graduate of Charles Drew High School, LeSueur demonstrated to the community that she could compete and excel in an integrated school environment. She was the ideal black student to initiate the desegregation of the local system, and the gifted education program, started under the leadership of school superintendent Bundy, proved to be a good place to begin the process. The era of desegregation for the Madison-Mayodan, North Carolina, schools had officially begun with this one outstanding student. A *Messenger* editorial praised "students, the general public, the local police and the school authorities" for their calm reaction and "level-headed attitude" to LeSueur's enrollment. "There are many persons in the area who are opposed to racial integration in the public schools," editor Russell Spear wrote. "It is gratifying that these persons placed the peaceful operation of our educational facilities above and beyond their personal feelings." The next year when

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18 Elaine Via McCollum, interview by author via e-mail, November 29, 2018; David Spear, interview by author, January 7, 2010; Spear, *Playing with Dynamite,* 128. In his memoir about his family and their small town newspaper, *The Messenger*, David Spear acknowledged the dilemma faced as they agreed to Bundy's request: "Collaboration between a newspaper editor and a school superintendent on managing news is a violation of newspaper ethics," he wrote, but explained that his parents made the decision as journalists fully aware of "the mood of many locals" that might cause the situation to escalate into violence.

events across the nation were clearly intensifying, the *Messenger* editor wrote, "But the race problem is no longer limited to the South . . . It is a problem for all Americans. Only a thin chain of reason has kept the country from plunging into racial chaos. Responsible people, across the land, are keeping a tight grip on that chain." In another column, Spear also suggested a biracial council to assure "peaceful progress," and praised the integration of several eating places and the local movie theater. "The fact that people, long accustomed to a pattern of behavior, have accepted a change in this pattern without blowing their stacks is a tribute to everybody in the community," he wrote. Most often, the voice of the local newspaper was one of racial empathy, but emphasizing reason and restraint.[19]

White moderates in Reidsville took much the same approach to integration. In the early 1960s, while the *Ziglar* case made its way through the court system, the Reidsville area took pride in its impressive new white high school facility and the continued academic achievements of the system's students. As he took office, the new mayor of Reidsville, attorney Julius Gwyn, became particularly concerned about civil rights issues in the area and, with other leaders in local government and the black community, took some measures to avoid racial violence in their city. Although he had no authority over the desegregation of the schools, Gwyn worked very deliberately to coordinate with local

19 "Negro Girl Admitted to M-M High," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger,* September 19, 1963; "Five Drew Seniors Get Scholarships," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger,* June 4, 1964; LeSueur, interview; David M. Spear, *Playing with Dynamite*, 133; "Common Sense Prevails," *The Messenger*, September 19, 1963; "The Chain of Reason," *The Messenger* April 2, 1964; "How about a Community Council," *The Messenger,* August 27, 1964. Spear's account relates that as one of the first black women to integrate UNC, Patsy LeSueur faced some resistance, finally rooming alone after two assigned white roommates protested.

African American leadership in other sectors to prepare Reidsville for the changes that were sure to come, in the schools and more broadly. Having witnessed racial confrontations in 1962 in a "circle of cities surrounding Reidsville"—in nearby Greensboro, Burlington, Winston-Salem and, just across the state line, in Danville, Virginia,—Gwyn formed and chaired the Bi-Racial Conference in his city of fourteen thousand citizens, one-third of whom were African American. The purpose of the organization, Gwyn said in an interview with the *Reidsville Review*, was "to promote better understanding and to avoid the ill will and conflict which have plagued so many Southern communities." Ruling out people "widely known for the liberal views," especially "white ministers," Gwyn assembled a group of "responsible citizens" of both races. Members made talks to all types of civic clubs, church gatherings, and business meetings in the area with the message that "it was going to be necessary for the White community to be prepared to yield some of its prerogatives to the Blacks." This truth was not popular with white Reidsville audiences and "was seldom received with a favorable response," Gwyn recalled. One prominent manager of a local industry even rose at a Rotary Club gathering to challenge Gwyn, contending that there was "no reason to change the 'Jim Crow' laws." Still Mayor Gwyn continued to work to achieve "fair play" for African Americans.[20]

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20 Julius J. Gwyn, "Reidsville, NC," 8, 4-5, 16; Capus M. Waynick, et al. eds., *North Carolina and the Negro* (Raleigh: North Carolina Mayors' Co-operating Committee, 1964), 145; "Protests in Danville, Virginia," *SNCC Digital Gateway*, https://snccdigital.org/events/protests-danville-virginia/; "Reidsville, North Carolina Population," *World Population Review*, http://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/reidsville-nc-population/; U.S. Census: 1960, Characteristics of the Population, North Carolina: 1960, Volume 1, Part 35, Table 21, "Places of 10,000 or More," 35-61; "Mayor Gwyn Reviews Racial Situation Here," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, [1962], Newspaper Clipping Files, Rockingham County Historical Collections, Gerald B. James Library, Rockingham Community

The first petition to come to him after he took the helm in Reidsville came from the youth arm of the local NAACP, which sought access to public water fountains, restrooms, and recreation facilities, in particular Reidsville's public swimming pool. These young African Americans had often "traveled to Greensboro to hear the fiery speeches and join the organized demonstrations" and were impatient with the slow progress of desegregation. Gwyn knew that the youth had plenty of reasons to seek better facilities. The "pool" that had been hastily created for black citizens at the segregated Lowe's Recreation Center was nothing more than a "large ravine" whose "sloping sides" had been plastered to hold water—a "large dish of water without a filter of any kind." Gwyn went before the Recreation Commission, a group composed of "equal numbers of Blacks and Whites," with the young people's petition. The mayor emphasized to them the disruptions that had occurred in nearby towns that had refused to open public facilities to all citizens. The Commission agreed to open recreation centers, including pools, to all races but did not want their decision to be publicized. When warm weather came and the pools opened, the African American youth leaders came to the Mayor's office to demand use of the white pool. They were surprised when Gwyn told them that all facilities were now open to them and, that if they had any trouble being admitted, to call him right away. Gwyn never received any such call and could not remember hearing any negative comments about use of the public pool by both whites and blacks. In the

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College, Wentworth, North Carolina. Among the members of the Bi-Racial Conference were white leaders W. Benton Pipkin, P. D. McMichael, and James Daniel. Black members included Clarence Watkins (black school supervisor), T. D. Williamson, and the Rev. Joseph Bethea.

coming months, however, two private swimming pools in Reidsville were organized and opened by whites.[21]

Gwyn and the Bi-Racial Conference were also instrumental in a second effort to attain fair access to public accommodations for African Americans in the Reidsville area. Having seen the success of the group in opening up recreational facilities, black leaders in Reidsville agreed to work with them in integrating local restaurants, almost all of which were small, locally owned businesses. A direct request from the Conference to owners that they admit blacks to sit and be served was declined. However, under the leadership of restaurateur Howard Fitz the owners reconsidered, as they continued to hear of ugly confrontations in nearby places where protesters had damaged restaurants. The owners did not really oppose serving blacks in their establishments, they said, but feared they would lose their white customers if they did so. The Bi-Racial Conference devised a plan to have all the restaurants in the Reidsville community integrated at the same time, so that no business was singled out and boycotted. At a specified time on the same day not made known to the public, one white and one black couple entered each eating place, not necessarily together or sharing a table. Each pair sat down, ordered a meal from the menu, and left without confrontation. This coordinated "integration" continued over a three-week trial period and, according to Gwyn, with the additional support of civic clubs and church groups, these "specific hours of controlled desegregation" ultimately succeeded. Different days of the week and times were selected "in order to introduce desegregation to a wide range of the community." This same tactic was also used, in

21 Julius J. Gwyn, "Reidsville, NC," 8, 16, 17, 18; Waynick, ed., *North Carolina and the Negro*, 147.

cooperation with management, to desegregate the local theater, so that gradually African Americans were no longer restricted to the balcony. Much of the action taken by the Conference was in response to petitions from black leaders, who demanded changes, including the hiring of African Americans in stores, banks, city government, and public health facilities and the complete desegregation of the hospital, medical clinics, and, of course, the schools. Although the petitions threatened boycotts, by mid-1964, under the auspices of the Bi-Racial Conference and as a result of "strong pressure" from all the sections of the local NAACP—Adults, Young Adults, and Youth—significant reforms had been accomplished in Reidsville and no "public demonstrations" had occurred.[22]

For these efforts, Gwyn and his wife, Trish, who worked closely with him to improve race relations and alleviate racial injustices, were ostracized by some in Reidsville. Although acquaintances exhibited more accepting behavior toward the couple as time went on, at one event in the midst of their civil rights involvement, people that they thought were their "country club friends" very overtly turned their backs on the Gwyns as the couple entered the club. The efforts of the Gwyns also received little support from the local newspaper, *The Reidsville Review*, whose editorial staff made their stand on calls for race equity clearly known in a May 1961 column condemning the Freedom Riders. The protesters were no more than "interlopers" backed by "a few million communists," the editorial read, "busloads of mercenary rabble-rousers" who were about "five generations too soon" in trying to change Southerners "overnight."[23]

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22 Julius J. Gwyn, "Reidsville, NC," 18, 19; Waynick, ed., *North Carolina and the Negro*, 144-6.

23 Julius J. Gwyn, "Reidsville, NC," 5, Foreword; "Too Soon," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*," May 24, 1961, 2. Trish Gwyn wrote of her husband Jule after his death, "He dedicated himself to the fair and just treatment of all those whom he knew."

Such a stance was in stark contrast to the weekly columns written in the Madison newspaper supporting efforts in the civil rights struggle. More than once the Spears wrote of the damage being done by older "reactionary, obstructionist Southern legislators" with the seniority to block progressive civil rights legislation. In a 1963 editorial in response to criticisms of President John Kennedy, Attorney General Robert Kennedy, and Chief Justice Earl Warren because of their stand on civil rights, the Spears were clear: "Our leaders and our government can and should grant the Negroes the legal rights to which all our citizens are entitled." That same year when I. Beverly Lake was once again running for governor, the Spears in Madison lambasted the candidate for his segregationist views, clearly expressed during his tenure as North Carolina Assistant Attorney General just after the *Brown* decision and in his campaign against Terry Sanford in 1960. Among many other bigoted statements, Lake had advised in 1955 that "every community in the state . . . be prepared to operate private schools to avoid integration." The Spears lamented the possibility that Lake might run again in 1964, because as an "avowed segregationist," he was a demagogue who fanned the "fires of racism." Later, as President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs were implemented, *The Messenger* also ran several articles supporting the construction of a federally funded, low-rental housing project in Madison that would be called Dalton Homes. The complex would eventually provide homes primarily for African Americans, but was envisioned by its supporters as a non-segregated alternative to the 157 substandard dwellings within the town limits. Madison would be a "much finer community," with better housing, the Spears argued. Of his father, David Spear remembered, "He had a lot of good ideas, he

had tremendous intellectual courage, and he would not back down on his belief about integration." Such clear local support for civil rights was not present in editorials of the newspapers of the two larger cities in the county—Leaksville and Reidsville.[24]

The most threatening opposition to civil rights came not from journalists or white neighbors, however, as the Gwyn family, the Reidsville community, and eventually much of the county were confronted with serious threats and intimidation by the Ku Klux Klan, which was growing in North Carolina. As symbols of moderate white support for African American rights, the "first family" of Reidsville, Jule, Trish, and the three Gwyn children, ages ten to thirteen, received repeated threatening phone calls, each with the message that the Klan knew all the family's comings and goings, even the children's schedules. Although the Gwyns did fear for the safety of their children, they persevered and even challenged the Klan directly. Having learned that the KKK planned to burn a cross in their yard, Trish devised a creative plan to thwart this intimidation. She and a good friend went to a grocery store where they believed the head of the local Klan worked. There, in his presence, they acted a sort of "theater" in which they shouted across the aisles about where to find the marshmallows. Why would she need marshmallows this time of year, the friend shouted. Trish yelled back that they had heard the KKK planned to burn a cross on their lawn that night and that the children were looking forward to "the biggest

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24 "South Needs New Political Leadership," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger,* August 8, 1963, 2; "Stubborn Old Men Have Too Much Power," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger,* April 9, 1964, 2, rpt. from *Lapeer County* (MI) *Press*; "Let's Wait and See," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, August 29, 1963, 2; Lake quoted in Ransome Ellis Holcombe, "A Desegregation Study of Public Schools in North Carolina" (PhD diss., East Tennessee State University, 1985), 70; "Giving State Bad Image," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger,* August 1, 1963, 2; "Low Rental Housing," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger,* April 8, 1965, 2; Spear, interview.

marshmallow roast you ever saw." There was no cross burning in the Gwyn yard, that evening or any other.[25]

Cross burning was one of several intimidation tactics, including rallies and downtown walk-throughs, used by the Klan as it sought to increase its influence and thereby prevent school integration. Though not a practice of the Reconstruction Klan, the cross-burning ritual was portrayed in Thomas Dixon's *The Clansman*, which was adapted for the infamous film *Birth of a Nation*. The first cross burning in the United States followed soon after at Stone Mountain, Georgia, and became a regular part of KKK pageantry in the 1920s. In the third incarnation of the Klan, after the *Brown* decision, cross burnings to signal KKK presence in a community were a widespread and effective means of intimidation, interpreted as threats of further violence. Scores of cross burnings were documented in the state's newspapers in the mid-1960s, as the state of North Carolina saw a dramatic rise in Ku Klux Klan activity. Flaming crosses were placed in "conspicuous places on highways" leading into numerous North Carolina towns. One was even burned on the lawn of the Governor's mansion in Raleigh, to which Governor Terry Sanford responded that he considered it a "badge of honor." Sanford made efforts throughout his term as governor to ease North Carolina through tense racial circumstances by working with mayors across the state, forming Good Neighbor Councils to negotiate in local communities, and sending his own children to a desegregated public elementary school.[26]

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25 Julius J. Gwyn, "Reidsville, NC," 5, 6.

26 Newton, The Ku Klux Klan: An Encyclopedia, 145-6. Wendell W. Smiley, *The North Carolina Press Views the Ku Klux Klan from 1964 through 1966* (Greenville, NC: Published by the Author, [1967?]), 5, 13, 62. "Sanford Plans State Council," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, September 14, 1962, 1;

Yet, as efforts to promote racial cooperation advanced in North Carolina, the state also became home to the largest Ku Klux Klan membership in the country. In 1963, what turned out to be a virile iteration of the Klan (the United Klans of America) had been organized when Bob Jones of Granite Falls got eight friends together to discuss the racial situation and what they viewed as the "Communist conspiracy" to promote race mixing. From this point through the mid-1960s, the Klan became increasingly more organized and a factor in North Carolina racial politics, as "tens of thousands attended their rallies," with a Congressional investigator telling the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) in 1965, "North Carolina is by far the most active state for the United Klans of America." With as many as 112 "klaverns," or local KKK organizations, by 1966, Jones labeled North Carolina as "Klansville, USA." With dues-paying members numbering six thousand, the group had a following of at least ten thousand in the state at its height.[27]

The Klan definitely had an increased presence in Rockingham County, as it did across the state during the era of the Civil Rights Movement. They held well-attended rallies, burned crosses, paraded through the downtown districts of Reidsville and Madison, and ultimately, even demanded seats on the county's Good Neighbor Council.

"Governor Names Good Neighbor Council," *Southern School News*, February 1963, 15; "School Trials Top Activity During Month," *Southern School News*, January 1961, 6. See the description in Chapter III of this dissertation of the use of burning crosses in a 1927 KKK parade in Reidsville. It might be noted that in the same week Governor Sanford announced his Good Neighbor Councils to work out race differences, Governor Ross Barnett of Mississippi was vowing to go to jail to prevent the integration of the University of Mississippi. See "Mississippi Defies Federal Authority," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, September 14, 1962, 1.

27 Dwayne E. Walls, Special Report, "The Klan: Collapsed and Dormant" (Nashville, TN: Race Relations Information Center, [1970?]), 4, 5; David S. Cecelski, *Along Freedom Road: Hyde County, North Carolina, and the Fate of Black Schools in the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 39; Roy Parker, Jr., "Klan Is Declared Thriving in State," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, October 20, 1965, 1.

In addition, in investigations into the Klan and interviews with 187 witnesses in 1965-1966, HUAC identified one group in the county that claimed to be a social club but that was actually a "front" for the Ku Klux Klan. When informed that the Fine Fellows Club of Reidsville had been exposed as a KKK klavern, both Rockingham County Sheriff Carl H. Axsom and Maury Loftin, Reidsville Chief of Police, responded that they had never heard of such a group. "We've known a few members of the Klan," Axsom said, "but this name of Fine Fellows is brand new to me." He estimated that there were about "30 or 35" members of the Klan in the Reidsville and Tri-Cities areas, but not as many as "they want us to believe," he said.[28]

Most Rockingham County citizens probably first heard about recent Klan activities when one local member, James Garland Martin of Reidsville, made statewide newspaper accounts because of his role in the 1958 clash between the KKK and the Lumbee Indians at Maxton, North Carolina. In that encounter, the Lumbees rejected a call from the Klan to maintain strict segregation in tri-racial Robeson County, where people of color (Native Americans and African Americans) outnumbered whites. Instead of a nighttime rally "to put the Indians in their place, to end race mixing," the event turned into humiliation for the Klan. Someone shot out the single light bulb illuminating the scene, and several Lumbees, who numbered in total about one thousand, shot into the

28 "Klaverns Active in Piedmont," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, October 21, 1965, 1; Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan*, 170, 198, 496, 465, 548, 234, 440. In Rockingham County, HUAC identified the Fine Fellows Club of Reidsville as a klavern of the United Klans of America. The Newtons also listed the Draper Hunting Club, but located it in Leadsville, NC, rather than Leaksville, so this also may have been a Klan-associated group in the county. In nearby communities, other such "front" organizations disguised as sporting clubs or community service committees included, according to HUAC, the Roxboro Fishing Club, the Pinedale Saddle Club in Pleasant Garden, the Surry County Sportsman Club, the Graham Game Club, and the Old Dominion Club in Danville, Virginia.

air. When the shooting started, the hundred or so Klansmen there, including Klan Wizard James Cole, fled the scene, leaving Cole's "gun-toting lieutenant," Martin, alone to face the Indians. After he was charged in the attack, Martin attended only one more KKK meeting in Reidsville, he said, to renounce his membership. He even received some sympathy from the Indians, who saw him as a "dupe" of Cole's more intense racial bigotry. In addition, it became known that Martin had a clean record before the Maxton incident and that he had young children and a sick wife at home in Reidsville that he cared for. Martin eventually pled guilty to inciting a riot and was sentenced to eighteen months suspended and given a $250 fine. Cole received a two-year sentence in prison.[29]

Increasing the frequency and visibility of their activities, the Klan reemerged locally in the mid-1960s. The city of Reidsville, with the largest black population in the county, was a frequent target. One such attempt to intimidate and stir racial tension took place in November 1964 when the KKK planned a parade on a Friday night, an evening strategically selected to coincide with the homecoming football game of Booker T. Washington High School with its major rival. In addition, it was a tradition at this game to have a homecoming of all the school's alumni, and a very large crowd was expected. Late one evening about two weeks prior to the big game, Klansmen from out of town (not local members in order to protect their identity) appeared at the police department to obtain a permit to parade through the business district. In nearby cities, such Klan parades had "deliberately inflamed Black citizens," resulting in fights, vandalism, and

29 Nicholas Graham, "The Lumbees Face the Klan," This Month in North Carolina History, January 2005, NCpedia, State Library of North Carolina, https://www.ncpedia.org/history/20th-Century/lumbee-face-klan; Ethel Ryan, "Reidsville Man Fined for Part in Klan Rally," *The Advisor*, June 1959, 5.

fires. Mayor Gwyn and the police chief both feared that the intent of the planned Reidsville parade was to "create an incident whereby White and Black bystanders would be brought into violent confrontation," but they knew that there was no legal basis for denying the permit. Gwyn told the KKK organizer, "You are not welcome here" and immediately started to devise some way to prevent violence. The ability of the Klan, with its ritual and elaborate pageantry, to draw a crowd and the timing of the parade on one of the busiest nights of the year for the community were worrying. Adding to the potential volatility of the situation was the short distance from the Confederate monument that marked the beginning of the downtown business district to the Kiker Stadium, where the important game was to be played—only two and a half blocks.[30]

It took a coordinated effort involving Gwyn, law enforcement, educators, downtown merchants, and the general public—both black and white—to fend off the KKK's appropriation of their downtown. The police force of twenty men was readied, local firemen agreed to be deputized as auxiliary law enforcement, and extra State Troopers with five attack dogs were brought in. Gwyn worked with local managers of industry and business, recommending to all that they advise their employees to stay away from downtown. Even though Friday nights, especially the one in question with a town full of out-of-town visitors, were possibly the most profitable time of the week for local businesses, Gwyn got commitments from Reidsville merchants, including the movie theater, to "close and cut off all their lights." The mayor also spoke to student assemblies

30 U.S. Census: 1960, Characteristics of the Population, North Carolina, "Places of 10,000 or More," Table 21, 35-61. Close to five thousand (4736) African Americans lived within the city limits of Reidsville in 1960, while the white population totaled 9,526; Julius J. Gwyn, "Reidsville, NC," 24-28.

at both Booker T. Washington and Reidsville high schools, tasking them not only with staying away from the downtown area themselves, but also making sure their friends and families did the same. The parade was held, but the plan succeeded in "depriving the Klan of the audience it desired" and avoiding confrontation. Just afterward, Mayor Gwyn found only empty streets and sidewalks, darkness, and an "eerie silence." "The Klan had packed up and returned from whence it had come," he recalled.[31]

The failure of their plan to incite confrontation on the Reidsville football night did not mean that the Ku Klux Klan left the area. In fact, large gatherings a few months later revealed the extent of interest in and support for Klan activities in Rockingham County. The first was an August 1965 rally and cross burning at a location about four miles south of Reidsville on U. S. Highway 29. Encircled by a "troop of uniformed, helmeted elite guards," more than two thousand in attendance heard from speakers who preached resistance to school integration. Greensboro minister and chaplain for the KKK, the Reverend George Dorsett, urged the crowd to "go to battle now instead of backing up" and to give money to the cause. A photograph in a county publication showed Dorsett counting the night's donations—a total of $167.97. The money would be used to stop school desegregation, Dorsett told listeners, by hiring eleven Klan organizers—one for each North Carolina Congressional district. The final speaker was the Grand Dragon, J. R. (Bob) Jones. Appearing in a "plain suit" and not the regalia of the organization, as most of the Klansmen and Ladies Auxiliary in attendance, Jones exhorted the "white Gentile Protestant people" to organize in the face of "stepped-up integration this fall" but

31 Julius J. Gwyn, "Reidsville, NC," 24-28.

not to "start any trouble at the schools." Young, innocent children might be hurt, he said. A cross burning followed his speech.[32]

Klan activity in the area was, indeed, becoming more serious, as the home of a rural black family, in the eastern part of the county, whose child was in an integrated classroom, had been shot into by Klansmen. No one was injured in the attack, but Klansmen began appearing in this area near Reidsville more regularly. In mid-September 1965, there was a skirmish reported between KKK members and African Americans in downtown Reidsville, followed by another Klan "walk" through the business section on a Friday night, this time with Klan Security Guard members wearing gray shirts and trousers, but again with "almost no audience to witness it." A Greensboro bakery manager was arrested on guns and alcohol charges at the event. He denied any KKK connection, however, claiming he had just happened to be in the downtown area at that time, wearing a gray shirt and pants. This parade, at which about 140 Klansmen marched, was observed by a heavy law enforcement presence. Once again, to prevent spectators, merchants shuttered their stores and the local NAACP worked hard to keep people off the streets during the walk.[33]

This march was followed in the coming weeks with several visits of KKK members to meetings of the newly formed county Good Neighbor Council. The Council was a bi-racial effort to stop the spread of "racial troubles" that might be "brewing" in the

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32 "Klan Rally Draws 2,000 in Reidsville," *Greensboro* (NC) *Record*, August 19, 1965, 6. "Klan Rally Draws 2,000 in Reidsville," *The Advisor*, September 1965, 57.

33 "Grand Dragon Calls for Klan State," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, August 19, 1965, 1; "Ku Klux Klan Member Charged in Reidsville," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, September 28, 1965, 8; "Klan March in Reidsville Is Peaceful," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, September 30, 1965, 1; "Connection with Klan Is Denied," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, October 1, 1965, A11.

county. Mayors in the county selected members from their various towns, while county commissioners chose representatives from rural areas. At the group's second meeting, Klansmen showed up to protest the fact that no representative from their organization had been appointed to the twenty-eight-member council. An editorial in the *Greensboro Record* reasoned, "Obviously no one thought of the Klan as a good neighbor." About a dozen Klan members, three of them "young men dressed as guards" sat as a group at the next meeting but did not ask to speak. In November 1965, a group of Klansmen, many in robes, showed up and marched for about two blocks in the downtown section of Madison, the other town in the county where a large percentage of the population were black. The local newspaper speculated that they had actually attempted to attend another Good Neighbor Council meeting but had found the courthouse in Wentworth dark because the meeting had been postponed. The Klansmen went on to Madison for the fifteen-minute "walk" at 8 o'clock at night since "they were all dressed up with no place to go."[34]

Such sarcasm marked the direct coverage of the Ku Klux Klan by Madison journalists. *The Messenger* staff was especially strong in exposing and confronting the dangerous and destructive extremist elements growing in the state, and especially in Rockingham County. Negative reaction from their advertisers did not deter the Spears from continuing their campaign for civil rights. In fact, although the family paper was

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34 "Planted Trouble," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger,* September 22, 1965, 6; "Rockingham To Organize Bi-Racial Commission," *Greensboro* (NC) *Record*, September 17, 1965, 4; W. C. Burton, "Rockingham Forms Interracial Group," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, September 18, 1965, 3; "Good Neighbors at Work," *Greensboro* (NC) *Record*, October 1, 1965, 10; Joseph Knox, "Bi-Racial Council Holds Brief Meet," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, October 15, 1965, 6; U.S. Census, 1960, Characteristics of the Population, North Carolina: 1960, Table 23, "Places of 1,000 to 2,500," 35-68; "Klan Makes Brief Visit to Madison," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, November 4, 1965, 1. Madison was approximately 38 percent black, according to the 1960 census.

still not entirely financially stable, they risked the loss of ad revenue in pursuit of what they saw as a moral imperative. Over two decades, the Spears had been warning the community against extremism, but this effort really picked up in 1965. Like Reidsville and much of North Carolina in the mid-1960s, the Madison-Mayodan area also experienced a resurgence of segregationist organizations. When *Messenger* journalists learned of meetings of such groups in the Madison area, the response of David Spear and his dad Russell was to attend the gatherings, write as many details as possible in the paper identifying local participants, and put the hate-filled speech of organizers in context. Fulfilling their goal of trying to lessen the mystery and power of extremists led father and son bravely to attend and report on the organization of a White Citizens' Council and a large KKK rally with about one thousand in attendance.[35]

When the *Messenger* editors learned of eleven hundred letters that had been sent out inviting area residents to an organizational meeting of a Rockingham County Citizens' Council, they wrote about it on the front page of the paper, giving the name of a supposed local organizer. This man, Tom T. Martin of Mayodan, tried to distance himself from the group, asking the Spears to print a statement from him saying that he had attended a previous meeting and had only "raised his hand" but was not the chairman. Having attended the event and taken careful notes, the Spears wrote in the next issue of the paper that the meeting was attended by about fifty men from all over the county. The story focused on the fact that the organizers and speakers were all "outside agitators"

35 For earlier warnings about extremism and the KKK in *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, see "Stubborn Old Men Have Too Much Power," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, April 9, 1964; "Not Wanted Here," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, June 25, 1964; "Governor Sounds Warning to KKK," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, July 9, 1964; Spear, interview.

from out of state. They included several paragraphs quoting the speeches, full of hate and fear, verbatim, in an effort, David Spear recalled, to reveal the twisted logic and dangerous nature of the group. (The main speaker, a man purported to hold a doctorate from Yale, said, "Wherever Negroes have been freed from slavery it is the white man who has been responsible.") The only local name included in print was that of the minister who gave the invocation, but the newspaper men took note of other area men in attendance, some of whom later showed up at school board meetings with angry questions for the school board. The Spears were never allowed at another White Citizens' Council meeting.[36]

Around the same time as the large August 1965 Reidsville KKK rally, David and Russell Spear found themselves at a Klan rally they had "tracked down" only a few miles outside Madison. They boldly went into the rally already underway, got into a bit of trouble as the flash on David's camera went off, but eventually were able to talk to the Grand Dragon, who was not clothed in a robe as the others, but in a plain business suit. Ultimately, after finding out some about the leader's personal life, they got permission to take all the pictures they wanted of the Klansmen but none of the crowd in attendance. They wrote about the experience both in a front-page news article with the headline "Grand Dragon Calls For 'Klan State'" and in a sardonic commentary in the next issue. In the news article, the Grand Dragon was quoted as making the threat, "We will fight integration of the races with every means we have, by ballot or bullets," and a final

36 "Citizens' Council Sets Meeting In Area at 8 Tonight," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, February 18, 1965, 1; "Citizens' Council Will Organize Here," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, February 25, 1965, 1; Spear, interview.

"ritualistic" cross-burning ceremony was described. In Russell Spear's opinion piece, however, the experience really came to life for *Messenger* readers. With a satirical tone, he described the Imperial Chaplain of the Klan in a "cornucopia hat with a white tassel," letting go "with both barrels against Negroes, white Negro sympathizers, and Jews." As he and son David watched the "goings-on," they realized that "the great man," the Grand Dragon, was actually a worn-out and homesick awning salesman from Salisbury, North Carolina. "This night work is killing me," the Klan leader, apparently Bob Jones, said to the Spears. After warning readers that the Klan were probably most interested in "lining their pockets from the buckets they pass about among the unwary, in remote pastures, at night," Russell Spear concluded, "The sooner the Klansmen go back to spending more nights at home with their wives and children the better off we shall be."[37]

Having faced White Council and Klan members in person and having done what they could to lessen their influence through belittlement and ridicule, the Spears were still serious about the situation. "Until a few weeks ago," they wrote, "Rockingham County was almost a model situation with school and industrial integration proceeding peacefully and to the apparent satisfaction of members of both races." The piece concluded, "It is hoped that its people will hang onto their common sense until this flurry burns itself out." *Messenger* editorials followed up on the KKK incidents. One expressed the hope that financial misdoings might signal an end to the Klan's influence. In January 1966, the Spears printed a strong criticism of the silence of North Carolina Governor Dan Moore

37 "Klan Needs an Answer," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger,* August 19, 1965, 6; Spear, interview; Russell M. Spear, "All Things Considered," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, August 26, 1965, 6.

regarding the dangers of the Klan, which had clearly stepped up their statewide campaign for members over the preceding year. The House Un-American Activities Committee had just determined that North Carolina was a principal breeding ground for the Klan in the United States, something that did not come as news to these local journalists.[38]

Despite their rallies, downtown marches, verbal threats, cross-burnings, and even gun violence, the Klan was not able to stop desegregation efforts in Rockingham County. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 passed in July of that year really gave impetus to school integration in Rockingham County, as it did all over the South. For a decade, only incremental progress had been made in desegregating schools, but Title VI of the new law gave the federal government enforcement strength. Each federal agency was tasked with overseeing that any funds it disseminated were provided to institutions that did not discriminate, and vital monies were tied to school desegregation. In an effort to make the status of each school system transparent regarding their progress, the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) sent notifications to all school boards in early 1965 that they were to submit written plans for desegregating their systems. Failure to submit an acceptable plan would result in the forfeiture of federal funds. This threat of intervention gave civil rights activists new energy for their work.

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38 "Planted Trouble," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, September 23, 1965, 6; "Klan March in Reidsville is Peaceful," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger,* September 30, 1965, 1; "New Good Neighbor Council Is Set Up in County," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, September 30, 1965, 1; "Klan Seeks To Put Three on Council," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger,* October 7, 1965, 1; "Klan Makes Brief Visit to Madison," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, November 4, 1965, 1; "Money, Not Reason, May Break the Klan," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, November 4, 1965, 6; "For the Preservation of Individual Rights, *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, November 18, 1965, 6; "Moving Deeper into the Shadows, *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, December 2, 1965, 6; "At Long Last!" *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, January 6, 1966, 6.

With the push from federal authorities, the actual plans for how each school system would desegregate still had to be worked out locally, and the four systems in Rockingham County went about compliance in their separate ways. Although HEW demanded detailed documentation, the process went relatively quickly in the Madison-Mayodan School System. Under Superintendent V. Mayo Bundy's guidance, the process of complying with the requirements of HEW was methodical and efficient. In February 1965, the school board voted unanimously to sign the Assurance of Compliance form No. 441, vowing "to act in good faith" in matters of student assignment and transfers. After a compliance supplement was ordered in May 1965, further forms of proof were submitted right away, and the system's plan of desegregation was approved in July. During the freedom-of-choice era between the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the abolition of the dual segregated system in Madison-Mayodan in the fall of 1968, a full year ahead of the other three school systems in the county, Bundy managed the desegregation process skillfully, organizing faculty training and making sure that both white and black schools ran on the same calendar and daily schedule in order to make the transition less stressful. These and other policy decisions readied the system for desegregation.[39]

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39 William A. Link, *North Carolina: Change and Tradition in a Southern State* (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc, 2009), 409; "School Board Votes for Compliance," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, February 4, 1965, 1; "Board of Education Approves Freedom of Choice Plan," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, April 22, 1965, 1; "M-M Schools Are Ordered To File Compliance Supplement," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, May 27, 1965, 1; "M-M Compliance Plan Approved by H.E.W. Dept.," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, July 1, 1965, 1; V. Mayo Bundy, "An Analysis of Desegregation Activities Carried Out under Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in Eight Selected North Carolina Administrative School Units, 1960-1968" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1970), 110.

V. Mayo Bundy had initiated change almost as soon as he arrived to take the helm of the schools in Madison in 1953. Though not yet forty, he was already experienced as an administrator and armed with a master's degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, long considered "the South's best and most cosmopolitan state university." A number of times the school board granted Bundy permission to take time away from his duties in Madison-Mayodan to attend sessions both in Charlottesville at the University of Virginia and in Chapel Hill, and he seems to have maintained close contact with educational professionals both at universities and in the state capital. When he moved his young family to the area in July 1953, a front-page article and photo of Bundy, his wife, and three children in the local paper, *The Messenger*, noted that they had recently moved into "the former Moffet home" and called them "Madison's New School Family." For over a decade, Bundy built trust in the community. Good working relationships served him well during the desegregation process mandated by the federal government. Into the mid-1960s, both newspaper and school board minutes showed a friendly, professional relationship between Bundy and the community and an enlightened, energetic, and involved superintendent nudging the school system forward. He would continue work on his doctorate in education during his tenure in Rockingham County and complete a dissertation in 1970 on desegregation in North Carolina.[40]

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40 "Bundy Named New Madison Superintendent of Schools," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, June 4, 1953, 1; William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 3; Minutes of Madison City Schools, October 5, 1953; "Madison's New School Family," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, July 2, 1953, 1; Bundy, "An Analysis of Desegregation Activities."

The dissertation revealed Bundy's knowledge of both educational and African American history. In a lengthy section on the history of segregation, he showed a sensitivity to issues of concern to black citizens not likely found in many North Carolina school superintendents of his day. In a carefully researched section of the dissertation, Bundy examined the history of the "illegal practice of segregation," explaining case-by-case the arguments that dismantled the "separate but equal" foundations of *Plessy v. Ferguson*. His phrasing clearly showed his sense of the centuries-long mistreatment of blacks and echoed the words of the President's Committee on Civil Rights, that the "separate but equal doctrine was one of the outstanding myths of American History." "It was always true," he wrote, "that Negroes were indeed separate, but the facilities for them were far from equal." He accurately analyzed the Pearsall Plan, North Carolina's 1956 legislation putting control of pupil assignments entirely in the hands of local school boards, as "buying time." Bundy went on to condemn these "delaying tactics of the governor, the legislature, and the North Carolina courts." He wrote with emotion about the situation: "Negroes will continue to demand and secure the same rights as other citizens. No other Americans have asked for more than this, or settled long for less. The question [is] . . . how long can the delay be sustained and what cost in human suffering and degradation must be sacrificed." No doubt, this understanding of the realities of race relations in the South affected the superintendent's working relationships with both blacks and whites in the Madison-Mayodan area and provided a foundation for his efforts in trying to bring about a fair, integrated, single school system during his tenure. Unlike many (if not most) of the white school superintendents in the state, he worked over many

years toward this end. Bundy clearly did not agree with the North Carolina General Assembly, which had stated in 1955 that "the mixing of the races in the public schools . . . cannot be accomplished and should not be attempted." While other white school leaders, such as those written about by David S. Celeski in his fascinating study of Hyde County, North Carolina, were intent on closing black schools to symbolize "the continuity of white control," Bundy was instead writing of the "great tragedy" of a white political machinery, along with the Ku Klux Klan, that had attempted to maintain their control over blacks through manipulation, fear, and violence. Instead, he sought ways to help educators "develop more effective ways to achieve desegregation."[41]

In much the same way as magnet schools were implemented in later decades to draw students and secure parental support, throughout his tenure as superintendent, Bundy sought to introduce innovative programs and teaching methods for all students, not just whites. He often reminded the community through *Messenger* articles of his belief in academic freedom and teaching critical thinking skills, expressed in the school system motto instituted during his tenure: "Inspiration To Think—Courage To Act." During the 1962-1963 school year, the program in gifted education that would eventually involve Patsy LeSueur was started. During the 1960s, teachers in Madison-Mayodan, the smallest of the four systems in the county, included a woman with a master's degree from Duke, a visiting Fulbright scholar from the Netherlands, and a former UNC professor with a doctorate in English. In December 1966, the superintendent employed the Dean of

41 Bundy, "An Analysis of Desegregation Activities," 44, 39, 54, 55, 28, 9; Joint resolution quoted in Cecelski, *Along Freedom Road*, 25, 54.

the North Carolina School of the Arts to teach a course in Modern Drama, and Bundy was successful in having the Madison-Mayodan Schools included in a program co-sponsored by Harvard University and Wake Forest University to establish classes in American Studies at both the junior and senior high schools. In the gifted program, talented students, no matter their race or socio-economic status, could be tested and recommended for advanced classes. Although such testing may have been seen by some as a means of tokenism, rather than an avenue for honest desegregation, the program appears to have been effective in opening doors for opportunity even before full integration. It was this program that allowed the LeSueur family and school leaders to effect Patsy LeSueur's integration of Madison-Mayodan High School. Black students were honored just as whites for their achievements. For example, in 1965, John Will Scales, the only black male in the senior class at Madison-Mayodan High, was one of the school's nominees for the prestigious Morehead Scholarship at UNC, a choice the superintendent would have been influential in making, and that would have made a positive impression on the community at large.[42]

Clearly Bundy believed in the effectiveness of a professional approach to school administration, utilizing experts to provide the latest scholarship and educational theories to assist local teachers. In this way, community leaders were exposed to new ideas,

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42 "From the Superintendent's Office," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, October 1, 1964; "M-M Schools Get Teacher for Talented," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, August 29, 1963; "Teacher Exchange Has Been Arranged," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger,* May 20, 1965; "State's Only Fullbright Exchange Teacher," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, September 30, 1965; Minutes of Madison-Mayodan City Schools, August 1, 1966; December 5, 1966; and January 16, 1967; *The Falcon*, Yearbook, Madison-Mayodan High School, 1966, 49; "Morehead Nominees," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, October 28, 1965.

including ways to improve the quality of education for all, including African Americans and the economically disadvantaged. He promoted school board participation in regional and state workshops and often traveled with them and local principals to professional meetings. Black and white administrators and board members apparently traveled together as a group to several professional meetings as early as 1954, when board minutes noted an upcoming session in Chapel Hill. No such mention of training for board members and principals was made during the previous superintendent's tenure. Bundy took over for the aging J. C. Lassiter, who had overseen the local schools for nearly forty years. As discussed in Chapter 6 of this dissertation, Bundy had moved to merge all faculty in the Madison unit into a single teachers organization in the mid-1950s, and the two faculties continued to meet together for the next decade. Some incremental integration of the teaching staffs took place in the early 1960s. When Bundy saw opportunity, he made efforts to place teachers where they were needed, not dependent on race.[43]

When overcrowding called for a transfer of teachers in the first and second grades, Bundy and John Dillard, the principal of the black Charles Drew School, proceeded cautiously, justifying their decisions by letter and publicly through the local newspaper, *The Messenger*, explaining the situation to parents before placing their children with a teacher of the other race. For several months in 1966, both driver's education teachers for the community were black. All students—male and female, black and white—who

43 Minutes of Madison City Schools, July 1, 1953; and August 2, 1954; Bundy, "An Analysis of Desegregation Activities," 107.

wanted to learn to drive would have done so with a black male instructor. This situation too was announced in the newspaper and there does not appear to have been any resistance to having white students drive with black instructors. In fact, these two black teachers kept their positions for at least two more decades in the integrated schools. Difficulty in procuring enough math and science teachers also gave Superintendent Bundy a special opportunity to mix the faculties. There were many young teachers available who had been trained at traditionally black colleges. Bundy and Dillard decided to transfer experienced and talented black teachers in these areas to the white high school. By the 1966-67 school year, two years before the elimination of the dual segregated system, eight of thirty-two faculty members, a fourth of the staff of the white high school, were black, mostly science and math teachers. From 1965 on, Bundy noted, he felt he was "granted complete freedom by the school board to employ the best qualified personnel regardless of color, race, or national origin."[44]

Perhaps the action that most distinguished Superintendent Bundy as more positively involved in the desegregation process than the other county school system leaders was his implementation of training for teachers and staff. As a way to increase understanding and ease tensions, Bundy applied for and received an HEW grant to conduct a series of "desegregation institutes" for an integrated faculty during the 1966-67 school year, two years before full integration. The Madison-Mayodan system was 1 of only 8 districts in North Carolina to receive funding for this endeavor, in a state with 171

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44 "First Grade Crowding Is Problem," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, September 2, 1965, 1; "Teacher Shift Made in Two Second Grades," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, September 9, 1965, 1*;* Minutes of Madison-Mayodan City Schools, April 4, 1966; *The Falcon*, Madison-Mayodan High School, Yearbook, 1967, 18-21; Bundy, "An Analysis of Desegregation Activities," 109-110.

separate school districts, most of which had not yet moved to assign students on a geographical rather than racial basis. In fact, of the 152 systems operating in North Carolina in the 1969-70 school year—a number reduced by about 20 from five years earlier through merger and consolidation—just over half were in full compliance with HEW requirements regarding desegregation. The Madison-Mayodan system was one. Held at a cost of $16,000, the HEW desegregation institutes in Madison-Mayodan were offered to all 120 staff members in the system and designed to help the 70 educators who chose to be involved to "develop more effective ways to achieve desegregation." The sessions ran from 4 p. m. to 9 p. m. on ten nights during the school year. Speakers included educational experts from universities, heads of large school systems in Chattanooga and St. Louis, and Governor Terry Sanford. Participants discussed the nature of prejudice, special problems of racial and cultural minorities, and the teacher's role in implementing the desegregation process. With topics from interracial dating to concerns about students staying to themselves rather than "mixing with others" to the possible feelings of inferiority among black students, the institutes served as sensitivity training for the faculty. In addition, participants in these workshops analyzed "various accepted myths, practices, and half-truths about race." Even thorny questions such as, "Is it true that there is a Communist infiltration in the Civil Rights Movement?" were addressed. The superintendent's evaluation of these meetings was that their success lay in the fact that "some of the myths were discarded when evaluated in light of established facts." One participant's positive evaluation of the institutes even prompted her to write

a poem musing on her new ability to understand what it might be like to be in another's skin. She wrote,

> I am white, but I crept in
> Right inside a black man's skin.
> The pages of his book are stained with my tears
> I rebreathed his all too familiar prayers . . .
> Henceforth this man's life shall stare at me,
> Through the soft warm eyes of Negro children I see.[45]

There is no verifiable way to calculate the effect of the desegregation institutes on the Madison-Mayodan faculty or to say whether the training actually reduced tension in the school system, but it can be confirmed that African Americans looked very favorably on Bundy and saw him as sincerely concerned about their welfare and respectful of their community. Sylvia Campt, the only black member of the faculty at the white junior high school in 1966, remembered Bundy as a very effective school leader, sensitive to the issues of both races during desegregation. Many recalled Bundy as a friend to African Americans. "They knew. You can tell when someone's sincere," Campt said. "Beforehand, the other superintendent, [J.C. Lassiter] now he did not even give the black schools equal instructional supplies." Eudoxia Dalton, who taught at both segregated and integrated schools, also recalled the superintendent as a "genuine people person . . . Mr. Bundy treated everyone well." Once at a faculty meeting, she remembered, he told teachers that all parents "love their children just as much as you do yours." African

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45 Bundy, "An Analysis of Desegregation Activities," 116, 233, 235-36, 118-22, 119, 12, 131; "Prominent Leaders To Speak at Desegregation Institute," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, September 29, 1966; "Desegregation Institute Opens for M-M School Faculty," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, October 13, 1966. Madison-Mayodan was one of 81 units in North Carolina to have met HEW requirements by February 1969.

Americans especially felt there was more to Bundy than just a manipulation of resources meant to look like equality in an effort to keep a dual, segregated system. Campt recalled seeing Superintendent Bundy "quite often" at the Charles Drew School when she was a student there, and he already was known to the black community as "very liberal." In 1960, school leaders, and in particular Bundy, were praised by members of the Drew PTA organization. "Our school system is fortunate in having a school board that is understanding, sympathetic, and alerted to the problems of education today," they wrote. "We are also grateful for the numerous visits made by our superintendent to our school and to our programs, and for his professional leadership among the teachers and in the community."[46]

It is clear, however, that Superintendent Bundy alone would not have been able to move the school district forward in eliminating the segregated system. The role of John W. Dillard, principal of the Charles Drew School, in the desegregation of the Madison-Mayodan Schools was crucial. In the classroom, Dillard, a graduate of North Carolina A & T with a master's degree from Ohio State, started out at the Madison Colored School teaching algebra and geometry. Eudoxia Dalton recalled that in addition to math, he also taught her U.S. and European history. "I thought he knew just everything," she said.

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46 Sylvia Jean Campt, interview by author, November 6, 2009; Eudoxia Dalton, interview by author, January 6, 2010; Holcombe, *A Desegregation Study of Public Schools in North Carolina,* 42; Letter to Board of Education, Madison-Mayodan City Schools from Drew PTA, April 30, 1960, in Minutes of Madison-Mayodan Schools. As discussed in Chapter IV of this dissertation, the black school in Madison had been named for Dr. Charles Drew, who was greatly admired in the African American community and who had lost his life in an automobile accident in North Carolina in 1950. See John Hope Franklin, *From Freedom to Slavery*: *A History of Negro Americans* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980), 443. In his classic history, Franklin notes that blacks protesting the separation of white and black blood banks by the Red Cross after World War II were quick to point out that "there would, perhaps, have been no blood banks without the work of a black physician, Dr. Charles Drew."

Dillard, a dignified, soft-spoken man, "long-suffering and committed," who had become principal of the black school in the late 1940s, represented the black population in the Madison-Mayodan area for at least thirty years. "He encompassed all good in an uncomfortable role," Dalton said. One of the few, and much of the time, the only black person at many meetings throughout the 1950s, Dillard seems to have worked very closely with the white school board and superintendent, even traveling with them to professional meetings at a time when accommodations were still segregated. Dalton indicated that Dillard reported to the African-American community that he did experience negative, disrespectful treatment at times in his meetings with white school administration and other boards, but this was not discernible in the minutes of the local board. Instead, the group numerous times "handed off" to Dillard authority to manage the black school as he saw fit and even to "appoint" other blacks to committees. "I think he did trust Mr. Bundy. He had a great respect for him," Dalton said. "I think Mr. Dillard and Mr. Bundy had a sort of agreement about how to proceed during desegregation." A few critics of Dillard thought that he was perhaps too cooperative with white leadership. According to Dalton, Dillard may have been misjudged. "He had a passive demeanor, but was strong," she said. Dillard's role as the primary spokesman for African Americans in western Rockingham County is clear. He was often pictured in the local paper as having been appointed to countywide boards and committees and appears to have been widely respected as an educator, as evidenced by his being inducted, while principal of segregated Charles Drew School, into Phi Delta Kappa, a biracial national professional education fraternity. Superintendent Bundy and other white administrators from

Madison-Mayodan accompanied Dillard to the ceremony at UNC-Chapel Hill, where he received a "special award of service and leadership" from Governor Terry Sanford.[47]

The overall goal for Superintendent Bundy during this crucial time was to carry out the changes "smoothly, free from violence and extreme discord in the community." Providing professional guidance to school employees during a difficult time of change was one strategy used in Madison-Mayodan. At the opening session for faculty in 1966, the chairman of the North Carolina Good Neighbor Council stated firmly that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 would not be repealed and urged teachers to accept that "segregation is illegal, a thing of the past." He went on to define educators' importance in eliminating "hate and prejudice" and to give several practical points to aid teachers of both races in making adjustments to the integrated classroom. There is much evidence in the school record and from participants in some of the events that Bundy sought a quiet and harmonious transition and that, when factors threatened this order, he tried to counter them. He was careful to work with both black and white educators and to explain transfers of teachers and students ahead of the actual move to avoid escalation of the situation. He sought the cooperation of local media in publicizing positive elements of the school environment and made sure African Americans were included in school programs as much as possible and that the names of high achieving black students were published in paper and shown as equal in ability to whites. By adding gifted classes and

47 Campt, interview; Eudoxia Dalton, interview; Donald Stilwell, interview by author, October 30, 2009; Minutes of Madison City Schools, May 4, 1953; and June 29, 1953; "Dillard Photo and Caption, Appointment to Board of Directors of Rockingham County Fund," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, April 1, 1965, for example; "Collins and Dillard Tapped into P.D.K.," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, November 12, 1964.

eagerly expanding opportunities for all, Bundy enhanced the quality of the system at large, making the Madison-Mayodan school district one that most citizens saw as well worth preserving. When, in August 1968, the local newspaper declared on its front page that the Madison-Mayodan schools now operated "on a 100% integrated plan," the goal of eliminating the dual system had been achieved. The community and particularly its school leaders could feel pride in the fact that their system was the only one of the four in Rockingham County to have reached this goal.[48]

In the early 1960s, African American students and their families played crucial roles in desegregating the county, both by being among the first during the freedom-of-choice era to request reassignment and by transferring to white schools. The activism of parents and students in challenging the Pupil Assignment Plan in school board hearings and in court brought about change not only in the Reidsville system, but also in the other school units of the county, as citizens realized the power of the NAACP's use of the legal system to bring about change. Black youth of the NAACP were also instrumental in bringing change to the county through their pressuring of Reidsville City officials to desegregate many kinds of public facilities, including parks, pools, and restaurants. Opposition to desegregation was increasingly strong in mid-decade, as the Ku Klux Klan heartily attempted to thwart civil rights efforts throughout North Carolina and were very

48 Bundy, "An Analysis of Desegregation Activities," 116; "Teachers and Parents Challenged To Make Success of Integration," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, September 1, 1966; "M-M Schools Open Fully Integrated," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, August 29, 1968; J. Michael McElreath points out that dismantling the dual system and 100 percent *desegregation* did not necessarily mean "genuine *integration*" in "The Cost of Opportunity," in *With All Deliberate Speed: Implementing* Brown v. Board of Education, eds. Brian J. Daugherity and Charles C. Bolton (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2008), 21.

active in Rockingham County. Taking some innovative approaches to gradually integrate businesses and challenge the Klan and other segregationists, white moderates in Rockingham County, such as the Gwyn family in Reidsville and the Spear family in Madison, also played a significant role in desegregation efforts. In the decade between the *Brown* decision and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Madison-Mayodan community in western Rockingham County especially made some real progress in preparation for school integration. The system had been brought forward over that decade under the guidance of Superintendent V. Mayo Bundy, a progressive leader who clearly indicated his intention to operate the schools professionally and fairly, with the ultimate goal of eliminating the segregated schools inherited from an earlier generation. Because of the effective leadership of black principal John W. Dillard and the fact that African Americans had built a strong foundation during the era of segregation in schools, churches, businesses, and political organizations, members of the black community, who made up more than a quarter of the school population of western Rockingham County, were able to exert some power during the desegregation process. Across the county, the process of school desegregation, so important to every community, was underway, with the Madison-Mayodan district about a year ahead of the other systems. Still, full compliance with federal mandates to eliminate schools segregated by race had to be

worked out locally in each of the county's school districts and would require difficult transitions for both blacks and whites into the early 1970s.[49]

49 "Enrollment Figures Off Expectation," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, August 27, 1964; for further context, see Jeffrey J. Crow, Paul D. Escott and Flora J. Hatley, *A History of African Americans in North Carolina* (Raleigh, NC: Office of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1992, 2002), 164-76; see also Harvard Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981, 1993, 2008), especially 18-36, 224, and the bibliographical essay, 257-9; and Charles S. Bullock and Harrell R. Rodgers, Jr., "Coercion to Compliance: Southern School Districts and School Desegregation Guidelines," *The Journal of Politics* 38, no. 4 (November 1976): 988.

CHAPTER VIII

ELIMINATING SEGREGATED SCHOOLS IN ROCKINGHAM COUNTY

A full decade after the *Brown* decision, schools in Rockingham County largely operated as they had for decades—segregated by race. Even with some preparations underway in the Madison-Mayodan district, a federal suit from Reidsville moving through the courts, and, in the aftermath of this litigation, the first transfers of African American students to attend formerly all-white schools, only twenty-one black students attended classes with whites in the 1963-1964 school year. By mid-decade, however, the threats of extreme segregationists in the Ku Klux Klan were being effectively challenged in the county, and desegregation plans for the four school systems in Rockingham County were slowly being worked out locally. Each district went about eliminating racially segregated schools in distinctive ways. This chapter will investigate the four separate paths taken by the city systems—Leaksville, Reidsville, and Madison-Mayodan—and the rural Rockingham County unit, which was quite different in structure and geography from the other three. At this crucial moment when the most significant change to Southern society in the century was being implemented, several factors served to either impede racial desegregation or to create conditions that made its success more likely.[1]

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1 Minutes of Reidsville City Schools, January 10, 1963; June 17, 1963; and August 12, 1963; Minutes of Madison-Mayodan City Schools, September 4, 1963; Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, July 1, 1963. Based on transfers recorded in school board minutes, the applications of twenty-five black students were approved for transfer, but four of those students decided to continue at their old schools. Only twenty-one attended formerly all-white schools in the county during the 1963-1964 school year, all but two of these in the Reidsville district.

Impediments to Implementing Desegregation

One element that impeded the implementation of *Brown*'s mandate was the fact that there was still strong opposition to the dramatic change in the racial hierarchy that school desegregation represented. Probably about half of Rockingham County residents were still operating under the assumption that the Pearsall Plan, which they had voted for just a few years earlier, was working to evade the whole process. They would not have to integrate schools if they avoided it long enough. As discussed in the previous chapters, over the course of a decade the area saw serious attempts by extreme segregationists to thwart any move toward desegregation by local school boards. Others sought to maintain Jim Crow divisions through intimidation and threats of violence. Although the dismantling of Jim Crow barriers was gradually occurring in several areas of daily life, many local citizens were not ready to accept these changes. In 1963, one grandmother from Madison was upset with the administration of Woman's College in Greensboro because they were allowing students to boycott segregated businesses near campus. She wrote to the Chancellor, condemning the boycotts and asking to be informed if her granddaughter were to become involved in such racially-charged activities. In a letter to the editor, one local man likely spoke for many as he lashed out, saying that the civil rights movement was "taking away white people's rights to create another man's" and, on business integration, asserted that a man who "puts up a place of business" had the "right to say who comes in there." As evidenced by the strong Rockingham County vote for segregationist George Wallace in the 1968 presidential election, by the end of the decade local attitudes were similar to those in a national poll, which showed that more than 50

percent of Americans felt that integration was being pushed "too fast." Just five years earlier, only 31 percent had held this opinion.[2]

Another, and perhaps the strongest, impediment to meeting the mandate of *Brown* to eliminate segregated schools was the weight of custom that supported a profoundly entrenched racial system, the depth of which many white officials did not seem to understand. Most whites, of course, were not among those vocally and actively resisting change, but they still accepted racism as a matter of daily life. Accustomed to a segregated world, a world of white supremacy, most school leaders continued practices of the past. This lack of understanding about how segregation damaged everyone helps explain why so many whites later would remember the times before desegregation as years of racial harmony. Even seemingly small matters such as courtesy titles and word choice made a difference in the interactions of blacks and whites, and some small, but meaningful, changes began to emerge in the mid-1960s. The Leaksville newspaper showed some sensitivity to racial rhetoric by changing the title of its column from "Colored News" to perhaps a better-received heading, "Activities of Colored People." The Madison paper went more directly from "Colored News" to the name of the black community's reporter, "Thenia Hairston's News." As late as mid-1964, however, black

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2 Letter from Mrs. Wade H. Gentry to Chancellor Singletary, May 5, 1963, *Civil Rights Greensboro*, Digital Collection, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, http://libcdm1.uncg.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/CivilRights/id/2195/rec/1; S. B. Kirkman, "Letter to the Editor," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, January 10, 1963, 2; 1968 Presidential General Election Results, North Carolina, U.S. Election Atlas, https://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/datagraph.php?year=1968&fips=37&f=0&off=0&elect=0. As a third-party candidate, Wallace won Rockingham County with 38.5 percent of the vote. See Dan T. Carter, *From George Wallace to Newt Gingrich: Race in the Conservative Counterrevolution, 1963-1994* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 1, 9. Carter argues that, even though Wallace framed himself as the preserver of states' rights, voters in 1968 knew exactly what he meant: he would defend racial segregation.

schools and teachers were still listed last when hired principals and teachers were announced to the public, and black educators were noted as "colored" or "Negro" in official school board minutes. For instance, in 1964, as they were recommended for rehiring, the principals of the remaining segregated black schools in Reidsville—Branch Street, Scales Street, and Washington—were listed after all the principals for the white schools in the system. Not until mid-1965, after civil rights legislation was passed and federal expectations became clearer, did black principals in Reidsville appear near the top of the hiring list, when H. K. Griggs, principal of Booker T. Washington School, was listed just after E. C. Anderson, his counterpart at the white Reidsville High School. Except for the Madison-Mayodan district, teachers were still divided by race in their professional organizations and local schools in the county dismissed school early on different days a week apart to allow white and black teachers to attend their respective district meetings.[3]

Another example of an accepted practice during segregation was the county system of appointing three or four-member oversight committees for each white school in the district. As explained in earlier chapters, these committees, which had their origins in the late 1800s, provided extensive experience in community leadership and were crucial

3 Mrs. Frank Williams, Sr., "Activities of Colored People," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, January 11, 1962, 4; *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, "Thenia Hairston's News," February 11, 1965; Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, May 20, 1964; June 22, 1965; and July 10, 1967; Minutes of Reidsville City Schools, March 3, 1964, April 13, 1964; April 12, 1965; May 10, 1965; April 4, 1966; and May 9, 1966. Probably out of sheer habit, by 1966, the Reidsville Board fell back into the accustomed order—all white schools listed first and the three black schools last. For a discussion of white supremacy as damaging to both blacks and whites, see David R. Goldfield, *Black, White, and Southern: Race Relations and Southern Culture 1940 to Present* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990).

in recognizing the role that local people had in overseeing their own schools. County school officials spent countless hours recruiting and appointing dozens of people to these positions that often groomed them for further political roles in the county. All white schools—even small ones like Huntsville with only six teachers—had three community members officially appointed to oversee them. Of course, black schools often had active parent groups that did much of the same kind of caretaking of their schools, but official recognition by an elected school board lifted white participation to another level in the eyes of their communities. Only in 1965, after learning of federal requirements to eliminate racial discrimination, did it occur to county school leaders that their three black schools—Lincoln, Roosevelt, and Stone—had never had local committees. They quickly moved to work with African American school supervisor Clarence Watkins to identify three black patrons of each school who would be "suitable and willing to serve," and they were appointed at the next monthly meeting.[4]

This long-established racial hierarchy also clearly came into play when African Americans were hired to work in the schools. Some examples reveal that when whites were doing the hiring, black applicants for school employment underwent particular scrutiny. To convince the board to replace a white truck driver for the county schools, who had left for a job at Fieldcrest Mills, with a young black man, the county superintendent spoke extensively on behalf of a young man, a "Negro of Wentworth," including his parentage (the son of the custodian at the Court House) and the fact that he

4 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, April 5, 1954; August 2, 1954; April 5, 1965; May 11, 1965; February 2, 1967; and November 12, 1968.

had "recently returned home from Army service." White hires for similar jobs generally did not require a school official speaking to the board on their behalf. Black educators sometimes felt that additional requirements were unfairly expected of them in order to be employed. For instance, in 1966, three Washington High School patrons, including the long-serving Joe Wright, who frequently represented the black community in school matters, expressed their concern that their teachers were expected to live in the community in order to be hired, while other teachers had no such requirement. They asked that this stipulation be removed from their contracts and that anyone who had not been rehired because of this provision be reconsidered for employment.[5]

The first black teachers who were hired to work in white schools often underwent special scrutiny, even in the mid-1960s, when all four school districts in the county faced difficulty in recruiting and retaining enough teachers. Boards often dealt with teachers reaching retirement age, but because of the shortage, they just as often granted waivers to older teachers and allowed them to stay in the classroom. In 1962, as a means of recruitment, the Bethany teacherage was converted into four apartments that rented for $35 to $45 a month to house teachers. Still, the Rockingham board in 1963 noted "an acute shortage of good and properly certified teachers," and by 1966, county superintendent Allan Lewis told his board that they faced a "serious teacher shortage," the situation being "worse than it has been in many years." Yet when in dire need of a high school English teacher for the white Ruffin High School, the board seemed to

5 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, January 6, 1964; Minutes of Reidsville City Schools, May 9, 1966.

require extra reassurance that a young African American woman was indeed qualified, and ultimately school officials needed the nudging of federal intervention to offer her employment. She was a local resident and held an "A" teaching certificate. She was an honor graduate of both high school and college and was recommended by the school principal and a school board member. The superintendent had interviewed the young woman and was impressed with her. However, as a conclusion to consideration of the applicant, the minutes read, "Miss A__ is a Negro. The U.S. Office of Education is putting on pressure to desegregate faculties in the County schools." The young woman was subsequently hired for the 1966-67 school year.[6]

Another factor that complicated school agendas in the 1960s was that the white population was so often absorbed in their own concerns, separate from any direct interaction with African Americans. In the mid-1960s, as young African American students were transferring to white schools across the county, many other educational topics other than racial desegregation were on the minds of local residents. In the Tri-Cities, plans were underway to build a white consolidated junior high school right next to Morehead High School. Replacing the Leaksville-Spray and Draper junior high schools, the facility was projected to meet the needs of area students for the next ten years. Still this new construction meant that more and more white neighborhoods were being consolidated and losing their "local" schools. Even before racial integration, many whites

6 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, June 4, 1962; September 6, 1962; April 1, 1963; April 6, 1964; March 22, 1966; July 11, 1966; and August 10, 1966. Retirement age was 65, at which juncture teachers were expected to leave the classroom. Providing housing in teacherages had once been a favored way of teacher recruitment but by the 1960s seemed old-fashioned and out-of-date. Within a few months of the Bethany renovation, the board voted to sell or remove the old wooden teacherage at Ruffin, which had become an "eyesore."

were no doubt already unsettled because of these changes. Later in the decade the entire Tri-Cities area was consumed by the complicated plans to merge the three towns of Leaksville, Spray, and Draper into a new municipality named Eden. This effort was several years in the making, culminating just as the schools were faced with working out final plans for racial integration and requiring the full attention of many local residents, even after the merger was accomplished in 1967. As the school desegregation climate heated up and engaged more black citizens, their white neighbors were not really expecting any related changes in their own schools. After all, African American schools, both rural and in town, had been operating for at least two decades as a broadly identified county system under the leadership of Clarence C. Watkins, who largely acted as its superintendent. Until the students in their own families were reassigned to integrated schools, white citizens were often quite distant from any involvement in local racial politics.[7]

Whites were not a monolithic group, however. Class and geographical divisions, evidenced most strongly in neighborhood and town rivalries and concern over liberal changes in educational policy outside of the control of local school patrons, made racial integration one of the issues of the day, not the only issue. The long-term effect of the strong school committee structure and control of neighborhood schools made issues arise among different white sections of the county that had to be dealt with by school administrations before they could consider how to bring blacks and whites together. As

7 "School Board Seeks Sketches of Consolidated Junior High," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, January 24, 1963, 1; W. C. Burton, "Unity of Eden—What Now?" *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, February 18, 1968, 43.

discussed earlier, Draper citizens, for example, had more than once been divided over the future of their schools, especially about whether to remain in the Leaksville system. In the western section, some white residents protested the closing of their community school in the Intelligence community at the end of the 1960-1961 academic year. Even though they did not expect to have their school reopened, petitioners representing approximately 150 area families expressed their "dissatisfaction" about how the closing of their school was handled. Later, three groups of white students who had not known one another from Madison, Mayodan, and Huntsville came together with African Americans to create the student body of the Madison-Mayodan schools in the late 1960s. According to one of the teachers involved, the recent "integration" of various white neighborhoods and socio-economic groups at times seemed more of a concern to the community than racial integration. Science teacher Sylvia Jean Campt recalled that there was probably more tension between the white students from Madison and Mayodan at the junior high school than there was between whites and blacks during the first year of the single school system in 1968-69. This division was, in part, one of class, but whether they were children of hourly wage earners or those with parents from the more established professional, managerial class, large numbers from all neighborhoods in the area owed their families' living to the textile mills, even those in the rural areas outside the towns. Still the various white neighborhoods had strong separate identities that sometimes conflicted in the schools.[8]

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8 Minutes of the Madison-Mayodan City Schools, April 27, 1961; "Intelligence Wants Hearing on School," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, April 20, 1961, 1; Sylvia Jean Campt, interview by author, November 6, 2009; *Hill's Madison-Mayodan (Rockingham County, NC) City Directory* (Richmond: Hill Directory Company, 1964, 1965, 1967); Author's observations, having grown up in the area;

High among the factors that slowed progress in eliminating segregated schools was the sheer magnitude of the task. Historian Michael J. Klarman explains that, while it was true that the ambiguous timeline ("at the earliest practicable date") expressed by the Supreme Court allowed foot dragging, the justices truly were concerned that administrators and their communities have time to tackle the many challenges of restructuring their schools. The rationale for the "deliberate speed" allowance of *Brown II*—that it would be very difficult to change deeply entrenched ways of interaction among the races and that so many details of reorganization would have to be developed—was made manifest in Rockingham County when desegregation finally approached. As Rosa Parks had speculated, the process really did have to be "worked out locally," and for this particular county, any changes had to be negotiated not only with federal and state entities but among local leaders in four separate school systems as well. Desegregation of the schools directly involved dozens of decisions, scores of decision makers, thousands of students, and tens of thousands of their relatives and neighbors. Facilities had to be surveyed, attendance zones determined, bus routes laid out, faculties merged, and more than eighteen thousand young people and children enrolled in schools that ultimately might be very new to them. At times, most crucial of all, school leaders had to deal with public reaction. Considering the operation of four separate geographical school units as well as schools segregated by race, district lines were not well delineated, system

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Progress Edition, *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, Summer 1964; "Huntsville Seeks Admission to M-M School System," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, October 10, 1968. On Huntsville merger, see V. Mayo Bundy, "An Analysis of Desegregation Activities Carried Out under Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in Eight Selected North Carolina Administrative School Units, 1960-1968" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1970), 133.

calendars were often in conflict, and bus routes were at times next to impossible to run efficiently. Bringing order to these circumstances was already a challenge. Adding elimination of racial segregation, all four of the school systems in Rockingham County had significant challenges. However, the rural district had a particularly complicated task, with attendance lines that encompassed a large rural area in the center and reached into the corners of the county, touching all of the other three local systems, three contiguous North Carolina counties, and the state of Virginia. The Rockingham County administrators were also operating the bus system for the whole county, while dealing with their own far-flung set of four small white high schools and their accompanying elementary schools spread out over the county. Complicating matters during segregation, for black students, the rural district had three schools for grades one through eight and no high school at all. If the district lines for the four school systems remained intact, all African American students in the county system currently in high school would have to change their allegiances—from Douglass, Drew, or Washington high schools—to one of the small rural facilities in Ruffin, Bethany, Stoneville, or Wentworth.[9]

Before the delineation of expectations that came with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the subsequent Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) compliance guidelines, one problem facing southern school officials was knowing just what would be acceptable to federal authorities. Noted in this study and by nearly every historian of the

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9 Michael J. Klarman, Brown v. Board of Education *and the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 83; Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, May 20, 1964; and December 13, 1966. In 1964, total enrollment stood at 17,607, with 4,517 (31 percent) for the county unit, 4,840 (27 percent) in Leaksville, 4,735 (27 percent) in Reidsville, and 2,615 (15 percent) in the Madison-Mayodan schools. By the end of 1966, the number of students enrolled in Rockingham County Schools had risen to more than 18,000.

civil rights era are two points: that state officials and Congress sought to delay or prevent desegregation and that the Supreme Court gave little guidance on how to merge the public schools into a single system no longer divided by race. As historians Charles Bolton and Brian Daugherity have pointed out, the "implementation question" was a tough one. In all four county school units, but in Reidsville especially, as it waited on court instructions in the *Ziglar* case, only "tentative" plans were made, "future conditions being uncertain." Under continued scrutiny from federal authorities, Reidsville leaders sought help from state planners at the Department of Public Instruction about whether a county-wide merger would be "advisable." Despite some efforts initiated by county unit leaders, this concept was not really acceptable to the larger city systems. A key reluctance for Leaksville and Reidsville was based on the lack of additional school taxes in the Madison and county districts, beyond those already available. In all likelihood, many anticipated the elimination of administrative positions in a merger and a loss of local control over their schools. Despite information-gathering treks to conferences and meetings with school planners about long-range needs and possible consolidation, all plans in the mid-1960s seemed tentative. Should school officials move ahead with new buildings and school improvements? How would their local schools be organized? In this time of uncertainty, Reidsville leaders still submitted a five-year building plan to the county commissioners that included several of the school improvements recently brought forward by black PTA representatives from Washington School. Their actions suggested

that they believed most of their facilities would still be used even if they did eliminate segregated schools.[10]

One assumption by school officials during this time of uncertainty was that they needed to provide transparency in pupil assignments. Because four separate school systems operated in the county, district transfers had already frequently been an issue. Having been accustomed to naming and specifying assignments for each student transfer separately, this process became considerably more difficult following further court rulings and federal legislation. As the decade progressed and scrutiny of cross-racial transfers intensified, boards were faced with multiplying applications for transfer but still largely accounted for student assignments that varied from the initial enrollment. After receiving the request from the Perkins family in 1960, for instance, the Rockingham Board appeared to provide information in their minutes about all applications for specific student assignments—white and black. This process was always somewhat more complicated in their rural system, as they potentially had students cross district, county, and even state lines multiple times each school year. In 1963, for instance, school leaders were still concerned about Virginia students attending Happy Home in the northeastern section of the county; it took a year to work out annual tuition payments of $100 per pupil. The most complicated transfers involved the constant moving of students between the rural county administrative unit and Reidsville. In the mid-1960s, district lines were especially unsettled in this area, with more than thirty students attending the county

10 Brian J. Daugherity and Charles C. Bolton, eds., "Introduction," *With All Deliberate Speed: Implementing* Brown v. Board of Education (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2008), viii; Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, February 21, 1967; Minutes of Reidsville City Schools, March 8, 1965; and March 22, 1965.

school of Williamsburg rather than the Reidsville schools where they lived. County and Reidsville school leaders were still meeting together in mid-1964 to resolve issues of pupil assignments for those who had been crossing district lines. Negotiations over the transfer of white students from the county Monroeton School into Reidsville were complicated, involving the school attorney and both school boards over several months. The situation was finally resolved by moving the entire eighth grade at Monroeton to either Reidsville or another county school—Bethany, whichever was more convenient. Overcrowding became an issue, however, and a few months later, twenty-six Monroeton eighth graders were denied reassignment to Reidsville Junior High School. Then, the following month, the Reidsville board reversed its decision and allowed the transfer. The entire process was time consuming and complicated.[11]

Even transferring from one segregated African American school to another in the county could be complicated. In the summer of 1963, seventeen black students who lived near Douglass in Leaksville were allowed to transfer from the county and Reidsville districts, primarily because bus transportation would be more convenient, while a petition from Stoneville parents to do the same was denied. If they wanted their high school students then assigned to Madison's Charles Drew to attend Douglass, they were told, they would have to follow the district policy of completing reassignment forms. Even though the loss of students often meant fewer teachers allotted to a system, transfers of white students were generally granted upon parental request. For example, in August

11 Minutes of Reidsville City Schools, April 13, 1964; July 6, 1964; August 17, 1964; July 8, 1965; and August 9, 1965; Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, December 12, 1963; January 6, 1964; April 6, 1964; May 20, 1964; and December 7, 1964.

1964, white students from the county district were granted transfers to Reidsville, Leaksville, and Madison-Mayodan schools. However, this listing of every single transfer in board minutes became nearly overwhelming by mid-decade, as the schools operated under the policy of freedom of choice. Comments such as the "assignment and re-assignment of pupils claimed the attention of the board and a lengthy discussion followed" were often echoed in various board minutes.[12]

Conditions Fostering Implementation of Desegregation Plans

Countering these significant barriers, several factors contributed to the eventual elimination of segregated public schools in Rockingham County. One condition that made integration possible was the pride that African Americans took in their own education and the care that they demonstrated in maintaining facilities. In many ways, black citizens continued to support all the way up to desegregation in the late 1960s, the positive "equalization" efforts of the previous decade, pushing for financial resources, new programs, and improved facilities. When the merging of black and white schools finally came, it happened more among equals; whites were not merely taking in those of "inferior" student achievement or being saddled with deteriorating buildings. Throughout the decade leading to desegregation, African Americans continued to build up their academic and vocational programs and to give special oversight to their own segregated schools across Rockingham County. In this effort, the Booker T. Washington School PTA, for instance, brought a detailed two-page list of "needs" before the Reidsville board

12 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, June 4, 1962; June 25, 1963; October 7, 1963; July 3, 1964; and August 24, 1964.

in mid-1964. Included were numerous needed repairs and maintenance issues, as well as requests for a new music building with rehearsal rooms for band and choir, a vocational area to house carpentry and bricklaying classes, and an auditorium to seat fifteen hundred. Paralleling the structure of many white systems of the time, they suggested that the 6-3-3 plan, with six elementary grades, three at the junior high level, and three high school grades (10-12) be adopted for their still segregated black schools. Such patrons were clearly attempting to provide their students with similar facilities, course offerings, and maintenance as those of whites. In response, the Reidsville superintendent C. C. Lipscomb agreed to ask the county commissioners for the funds needed to complete projects at both the white and black high schools in his system in early 1965. A delegation from the same Reidsville school, this time with four female officers, again appeared before the Board with another detailed list the following year. They petitioned for "adequate classroom space," as well as "expansion of the Vocational Education Program" and a "Music Building and Auditorium."[13]

Even at times with limited resources, the three black high schools—Booker T. Washington in Reidsville, Douglass in Leaksville, and Charles Drew in Madison—were central to the vibrant black communities who bolstered them and maintained their reputations as high-quality academic institutions and community bulwarks. An argument could be made that at the time of the federal mandates to desegregate in the mid-1960s, the traditionally black high schools were equally as strong as the three white city high schools—Reidsville, Morehead, and Madison-Mayodan. This quality of excellence can

13 Minutes of Reidsville City Schools, April 13, 1964; January 11, 1965; and April 12, 1965.

be readily seen in a review of the Charles R. Drew School and the black community in Madison. By the mid-1960s, the Drew School had a reputation as one of the most respected institutions for African Americans in the Piedmont. "They had great teachers there," teacher and Drew alumnus Jean Campt recalled. Many staff members at Drew were recent graduates of historically black colleges and several had advanced degrees, including Savannah LeSueur, who had studied on a fellowship at Penn State during the 1962-63 year, and Mabel G. Dillard, the wife of the principal, John Dillard. Mrs. Dillard was a particularly keen scholar, who in addition to teaching English at the local black high school and pursuing her doctorate at Ohio University, at various times during the 1950s and 1960s studied and taught abroad. *The Messenger* reported that in 1958 she taught for a year under the auspices of the State Department at the University of Liberia and studied French in Paris for eight weeks in 1962. She would go on to hold a professorship in English at North Carolina A&T University. During this time, Mrs. Dillard was also instrumental in establishing several organizations for black professional women in Piedmont North Carolina and was well known throughout the region for her achievements. Back at her home in Madison, she often hosted meetings and shared her experiences with the wider African American community. The Charles Drew faculty clearly had some first-rate academic credentials.[14]

Many outstanding Drew students and graduates were often mentioned in the local newspaper. Benjamin Johnson, in 1963, was the only graduate from the area to be

14 Campt, interview; Savannah LeSueur, interview by author, January 29, 2010; "Teacher Has Chance To Go to Ohio U," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, August 1, 1963; Minutes of Madison City Schools, July 9, 1957; Obituary, Mabel G. Dillard, *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, February 27, 1991; RaVonda Dalton-Rann, interview by author, January 12, 2010.

accepted into the Peace Corps. Nathaniel Scales, a musician, was one of the eight system students nominated for the Governor's School in its second year of operation. Charles Drew School became noted in the community and beyond for its outstanding music program, especially its marching band, and had close connections to programs at black colleges around the state. For instance, Dr. Robert John, head of music study at North Carolina College (now North Carolina Central University) in Durham, visited the high school in May 1964 for the purpose of "looking in on the music department." With an outstanding music program at Drew already in place, school superintendent V. Mayo Bundy scrambled upon arrival in Madison to add band to the curriculum of the white schools. One of only two black union high schools in the state to be accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), the Charles Drew School achieved this distinction in December 1963. For many years, the school served not only students from the immediate area but some black students who lived in the Leaksville, Stoneville, and Bethany districts as well as eastern Stokes County.[15]

Over the decade leading to desegregation, newspaper articles showed Drew pupils and the black community at large to be hardworking and responsible. One noted that Drew students, in addition to their studies, had been assiduously refinishing their school

15 "Drew Graduate Trains for Peace Corps," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, June 27, 1963; "Colored News," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, July 11, 1963; "Eight M-M Students Named Candidates," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, February 20, 1964; "Colored News," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, May 7, 1964; Potential band for white schools discussed in Minutes of Madison City Schools, March 7, 1955; "M-M Schools Get Accreditation at Memphis Meeting," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, December 5, 1963; "Transfer of Drew Students Studied," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, July 4, 1963. Principal John W. Dillard traveled to Memphis as did Jake Atkinson, principal of the white Madison-Mayodan High School, to attend the meeting. The other accredited North Carolina black school admitted to the Southern Association was Mt. Olive. Both were "union" schools serving all grades, elementary through high school.

desks. At black schools, teacher Eudoxia Dalton recalled, students were expected to work hard. "We were taught that we had to do twice as much to get half as far," she said. Graduates attended and excelled at nearly all the historically black colleges in the state, as well as other nationally known schools such as Spelman, Fisk, and Howard. Connecting the school to its namesake, in the middle of the desegregation era, a large feature photograph showed advanced Drew biology students involved in an extensive blood typing project. In one week, the students had typed 145 students in grades 10-12, as well as school personnel. Despite critics' charges of low standards among African Americans used to discredit desegregation efforts, the state of black education in Rockingham County, as evidenced by the achievements of its black high school students, was strong.[16]

Ultimately overcoming all other factors slowing the implementation of *Brown* was a combination of grassroots activism, black organizational persistence, and the force of federal intervention. The pressure exerted in 1961-1962 by local black students and their families backed by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in challenging racially segregated facilities and pupil assignments in Reidsville was clearly a turning point in breaking down Jim Crow in Rockingham County. In 1965, added to this persistent pressure was the enforcement of Title VI provisions of the Civil

16 "Colored News," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, May 14, 1953; Eudoxia Dalton, interview by author, January 6, 2010; "Colored News," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, October 16, 1952, June 16, 1955, and September 22, 1955, for example; "Charles Drew Students Study Blood Project," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, April 1, 1965. For an analysis of a second wave of segregationist resistance to desegregation that emphasized black crime, illegitimate births, and inferior academic ability, see Anders Walker, *The Ghost of Jim Crow: How Southern Moderates Used* Brown v. Board of Education *to Stall Civil Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Rights Act of 1964, which predicated the receipt of federal monies for "any program or activity" on eliminating racial discrimination, enforced through the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW). These funds would over time become increasingly important to less-wealthy systems, such as those in Rockingham County, as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 provided important financial support for instructional materials, reading programs, school libraries, and many other programs aimed at reducing the effects of poverty on education. Some critics charged that recalcitrant systems would just choose to forfeit federal money in order to retain segregated schools. This loss would hurt African American students, who benefited greatly from funded programs to alleviate poverty, especially hard, they argued. This result, however, did not manifest itself locally. Instead, tying HEW compliance to federal funds proved to be an effective means of pushing the four systems in the county to desegregate. The importance of the ESEA Title I program, for instance, was evidenced locally by the fact that the Reidsville board moved one of its male elementary principals into a newly created full-time position as coordinator for this federal program in 1967. To secure federal funding, each school system had to be on a proven path to racial equity with a written desegregation plan periodically evaluated for progress by federal officials. North Carolina educators got news of this mandate from state leaders like Governor Dan Moore, who called it "unwarranted intrusion," but they seemed resigned to compliance because there appeared to be "no wiggle room" in the legislation. As federal pressure to desegregate mounted, however, so did segregationist forces, with the KKK in North Carolina seeing more klaverns formed in the spring and summer of 1965 than at any

other time. Over the next five years, each school district in Rockingham County responded independently to a succession of federal requirements and judicial rulings and took paths with different trajectories toward eliminating segregated schools.[17]

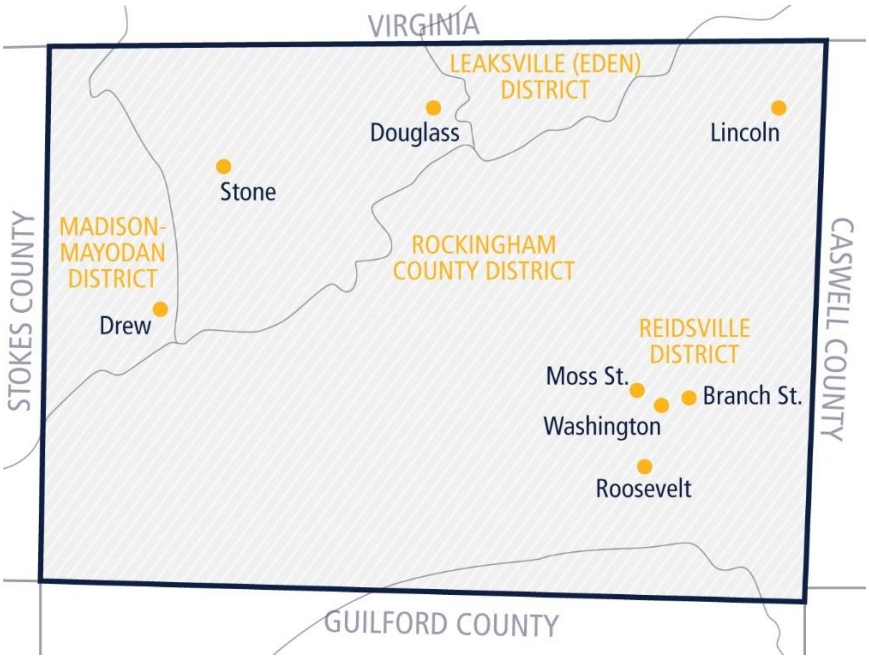

Figure 3. African American Schools in Rockingham County, Circa HEW Desegregation, 1965. Map by Graham Russell. The Map Reflects the Locations of the Eight Schools with All-black Enrollment in 1965: Drew in the Madison-Mayodan Administrative Unit; Douglass in the Eden (Formerly Leaksville Township) School System; Moss St., Branch St., and Washington in the Reidsville District; and Stone, Lincoln, and Roosevelt in the Rockingham County system.

17 "The Civil Rights Act of 1964," in James Tackach, *The Civil Rights Movement, Opposing Viewpoints Digests* (San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press, Inc., 2001), 98-99; "Selective 'Guidelines,'" *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, July 8, 1969, 6; Catherine A. Paul, "The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965," *Social Welfare History Project*, Virginia Commonwealth University Libraries, https://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/programs/education/elementary-and-secondary-education-act-of-1965/; Minutes of Reidsville City Schools, June 13, 1966; and April 10, 1967; J. Michael McElreath, "The Cost of Opportunity: School Desegregation's Complicated Calculus in North Carolina," in *With All Deliberate Speed: Implementing* Brown v. Board of Education, eds. Brian J. Daugherity and Charles C. Bolton (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2008), 26; Roy Parker, Jr., "Rise in Klan Fever Awaited: More School Integration May Stir Action," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, March 13, 1966, 4. Paul explains that the ESEA as a part of Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty was initially funded through 1969 but has been reauthorized every five years since. This important legislation has been amended numerous times to include programs to address disabilities, vocational education, and gender inequity, among other issues.

Madison-Mayodan

HEW sent letters to public school administrators in early 1965, officially informing them of the requirement that racial discrimination in their systems had to be eliminated in order to continue to receive federal funds. The first step was to sign HEW Form-441, an "assurance of compliance" commitment. Leaders of all four systems signed this agreement right away, sought compliance with the HEW mandate, and issued statements regarding their plans, but the Madison-Mayodan (M-M) district was the first of the four to fully comply. As discussed earlier, M-M Superintendent V. Mayo Bundy proved himself during the desegregation process to be a very progressive educator and seemed eager to receive the HEW directives. Historian Michael McElreath has noted that "the more cooperation the HEW regulators perceived, the more favorably they were likely to view a district's efforts." Federal officials then must have been very pleased with the response from the Madison-Mayodan administrative unit. Bundy and other community leaders had, in fact, been preparing the community for school integration for several years. In the 1950s, the superintendent had started holding integrated faculty meetings. Local newspaper editors wrote frequent editorials urging racial equity and understanding. Black educators and students stood ready to participate in transfers. In the fall of 1963, Bundy had initiated student integration with an accelerated high school program and, utilizing the same IQ and achievement tests for all, had been granted authority to admit all "properly qualified" students. Even before the HEW mandate, the board authorized all transfer requests that came before them "to the school of their choice." As far as federal regulations were concerned, Bundy was clearly aware long-

term of what HEW compliance would mean and was ready to push forward in the process, but he still twice had to provide supplemental material to bolster claims of an effective desegregation plan for the coming school year. The initial document of agreement, which included a promise to "immediately take any measure necessary" to meet expectations, was prepared quickly and submitted on February 1, 1965. A letter to the state superintendent was sent the same day verifying that the Madison-Mayodan system had sent in Form 441 and stating that they believed they were already "complying fully." HEW, however, required a more detailed "Plan for Compliance." This four-page document was filed on April 14, 1965. In it, figures showed, despite some very sincere intentions on the part of some school leaders, that the system was still very much segregated. Only 4 African Americans of the 705 enrolled in the district attended school with whites. Policies of racial equity were delineated regarding faculty, bus transportation, and pupil assignment. Applications of choice for both student and teacher assignments were included.[18]

Still, federal authorities wanted further information. At this point, Bundy talked personally by phone with the HEW regional director, Robert H. Janover, and gained clarification on what supplementary information was needed. The system had to show that there were truly measures in place to bring about about racial integration, that they had informed all students and parents of the freedom of choice plan, and that they had made the needed applications accessible. By the time this second supplement was

18 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, February 1, 1965; Minutes of Madison-Mayodan City Schools, September 4, 1963; August 24, 1964; February 1, 1965; and April 14, 1965; Minutes of Reidsville City Schools, April 12, 1965; Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, January 11, 1965; February 8, 1965; McElreath, "The Cost of Opportunity," 28.

presented to HEW on May 21, school leaders had received a strong letter of support signed by thirteen white pastors from the Western Rockingham Ministerial Association, pledging their cooperation "in whatever way the board deems necessary to achieve such a transition." They also had received and approved forty-five cross-racial transfer requests of black students for the next school year, leaving the sixth grade as the only one not desegregated. Including other transfers in and out of the district, sixty students of both races were involved in reassignments for the 1965-1966 year. Local journalists noted, "Compliance under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is not easy," as headlines in the local paper made clear that the changes being implemented were required by federal officials "who hold in their hand the power to cut off $65,000 in federal aid to the local schools." Bundy next implemented several staffing measures, including assigning all behind-the wheel driver education for the system to certified black educators. Finally, the measures to implement desegregation were judged acceptable by HEW, and the Madison-Mayodan Administrative unit's plan for the next school year was approved in July.[19]

In September 1965, both faculty and student integration were extended at the elementary level. Because of overcrowding, four African American first graders were transferred to Madison Elementary from Drew. A white second grade teacher had to move to first grade to take the additional class needed there, leaving an opening in second

19 Minutes of Madison-Mayodan City Schools, May 3, 1965; May 21, 1965; and June 21, 1965; Letter from Western Rockingham Ministerial Association to the Madison-Mayodan City Board of Education, May 14, 1965; "Board of Education Approves Freedom of Choice Plan," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, April 22, 1965, 1; "Sixty Will Transfer Under New Pupil Assignment Plan," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, May 20, 1965, 1; "M-M Schools Are Ordered To File Compliance Supplement," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, May 27, 1965, 1; "M-M Compliance Plan Approved by H.E.W. Department," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, July 1, 1965, 1.

grade at the white elementary. Seeing this opening as a moment of opportunity, the superintendent also moved Betty N. Friende, an African American second-grade teacher, to the white Madison Elementary School. Friende had been positively seen in the newspaper at the end of the previous school year in a feature photograph showing the teacher and her class on a field trip downtown to visit city offices and the railroad station on a "Community Helper Tour." Newspaper editors carefully explained this transfer, the first local reassignment of a black elementary teacher to a white school, on their pages. In November of 1965, the Spears at *The Messenger* also ran a lengthy editorial piece in which they fully explained the desegregation process as required by HEW and provided a schedule for the elimination of segregated schools in Madison-Mayodan. Acknowledging that "integration" could mean the enrollment of a few African Americans (or even one black student) in a white school, the local system was already ahead of the HEW requirements that four grades in each system be integrated each year. The Spears gave a vigorous defense of Madison-Mayodan school officials, who were "doing their best to work out a solution to a difficult problem" under strict scrutiny from Washington. At this early point in the desegregation process, school leaders announced their plans to fully integrate, utilizing Drew, the current black school, as a "junior high for the entire M-M system" by the fall of 1968. In the fall of 1965, none of the other school systems in the county gave the public nearly so clear a picture of their desegregation plans. In

addition, already about 12 percent of the district's black high school students had already chosen to transfer to Madison-Mayodan High School.[20]

After initial approval of the plan, Bundy soon applied for and received a grant through HEW to undertake the training of faculty and staff in preparation for working in integrated schools. In 1966, while the other three county school superintendents were still working with their administrators to work out local desegregation plans, seventy Madison-Mayodan educators were participating in a series of in-depth sessions that addressed many pressing issues at the intersection of race and education. The curriculum for these "desegregation institutes" was truly remarkable, with both theoretical and practical components, constructed to achieve many progressive goals outlined in the training handbook for participants. Among these goals were: "To develop a personal and professional commitment to the advantages of a desegregated program" and "To acquaint participants with the scientific facts concerning the nature of prejudice." From October 1966 through April of the next year, more than half of the teachers employed in the Madison-Mayodan system attended a series of ten five-hour sessions led by respected scholars and professional educators. The first presenter, for example, was Dr. Guy B. Johnson of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, a sociology professor, who discussed with attendees the social construct of race. At each session, after a presentation by experts in various fields and a break for an evening meal, participants listed at least

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20 "1st Grade Crowding Is a Problem," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, September 2, 1965, 1; "Teacher Shift Made in Two Second Grades," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, September 9, 1965, 1; "Community Helper Tour," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, May 13, 1965, 6; "Schedule for Integrating Madison-Mayodan Schools," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, November 11, 1965, 8; Bundy, "An Analysis of Desegregation Activities," 113-4; Minutes of Madison-Mayodan City Schools, Supplement to HEW, October 6, 1965.

three issues they wanted to address in the discussions which followed. Overall, participation in these workshops would have been roughly equivalent to taking a college course on race relations and surely helped prepare faculty for eventual integrated classrooms.[21]

In the heat of efforts to desegregate, however, some community members became discontented with a number of developments they saw in the schools. Organized in the summer of 1966, the Committee for Better Schools aired their grievances, what the Winston-Salem newspaper called "a variety of seemingly disjointed issues," even before meeting with the school board or system administrators, a move that was roundly criticized by local journalists Russell and Mimi Spear. The group's purpose appeared to be to "sit in judgment" of the school administration, they wrote, without discussing their criticisms with the school board, a "dedicated and hard-working group of men" who were dealing with a long list of "difficult problems." The Spears found the actions of the Committee for Better Schools, "a small group of disgruntled school patrons," "disturbing" and potentially harmful, not only to the schools but to the community at large. The group, however, initiated a huge public meeting about two weeks later at which they threw more than two dozen questions at Superintendent Bundy and the school board about issues ranging from the hiring of personnel to the rumored inequitable treatment of students from Mayodan and those from Madison. They appeared to be most upset over the teaching of controversial literature, specifically the use of the J. D.

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21 Minutes of Madison-Mayodan City Schools, August 1, 1966; Madison-Mayodan City Board of Education, Training Manual, *Desegregation Institute: A Ten-Session Workshop*, October 11, 1966-April 17, 1967, Museum and Archives of Rockingham County (MARC), Wentworth, North Carolina.

Salinger novel *The Catcher in the Rye* in a federally funded high school summer English class for reluctant readers. Bundy and school board chairman, Dalton L. McMichael, explained that the book had been recommended by North Carolina Advancement School, approved by the state Board of Education, and selected because of its potential appeal to those who previously had lacked interest in school. Bundy also denied any mistreatment of Mayodan students and explained how teachers were screened, defending his own professionalism and that of the local staff. Bolstered by support from local ministers and journalists, the school board subsequently issued a policy statement expressing their "confidence in the administrative staff and all teachers in the unit. We want to back them up, and under no circumstances will we be a part of their being run off," McMichael wrote. He assured citizens that the board was always available to them at open board meetings if they had "constructive criticism" but also defended the decision to implement experimental federal programs and academic freedom in the system's classrooms. The board would prefer that the Salinger novel "not be used as a basic textbook," he explained, but *The Catcher in the Rye* would not be removed from the library or from the approved supplementary reading list for Madison-Mayodan students. McMichael, the influential board chairman whose textile company provided employment for hundreds of area citizens, was very clear in supporting the school superintendent. "I know of no more dedicated school administrator in North Carolina than Mayo Bundy," he told the public. At this point, the discontent seemingly was put to rest.[22]

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22 "School Problems," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, July 14, 1966; Thomas Pepper, "Madison-Mayodan Educators Uphold Academic Freedom," *Winston-Salem* (NC) *Journal*, August 2, 1966, 10A; "M-M School Heads Face Barrage of Questions," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, August 4, 1966, 1;

Whether this episode of discontent was linked to the activism of the Superintendent in desegregating the schools is debatable, but it did occur at a time when significant numbers of black and white students were integrating in the system's classrooms and just after a very public appearance of the school leader at a conference sponsored by the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights. As the only educator invited to address the group, Bundy spoke to the crowd of nine hundred at UNC-Greensboro about what parents could do to help during this time of great change. Both races must be "honest, frank, and objective in our thinking based upon fact," Bundy asserted, and must expose and dispel "myths about the Negro." Beliefs that blacks were happy with their Jim Crow status, that "an order is already set up that is working well," or that African Americans had lower intelligence or moral values were "myths that cannot and should not be defended," he said. Instead, a "knowledge of and respect for the contributions the Negro has made to American society must be stressed," Bundy concluded. These remarks were printed in the Madison newspaper so that the local community could not have been unaware of Bundy's firm stand on race. Apparently, area segregationists took note of the rift in school support, as fifteen "strangers" believed to be Klan members showed up at the follow-up meeting of the Citizens for Better Education. Even though the citizens' group had already announced its intention to suspend their meetings for the foreseeable future, the Klan visitor, identified as "Clyde Jones," stood and urged the organization to "strike while the iron is hot" and continue pushing the school board

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"Board Chairman's Policy Statement," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, August 4, 1966, 1; Minutes of Madison-Mayodan City Schools, August 1, 1966; and November 7, 1966.

"while they are off balance." The "Better Education" group leader immediately adjourned the meeting.[23]

After this unsettled summer of 1966, desegregation plans continued in Madison-Mayodan. Each year, the system took steps to implement the changes necessary to further racial integration, beginning with the faculty desegregation institutes. During the 1966-67 and 1967-68 school years, the Madison-Mayodan system reorganized on a 6-3-3 plan, submitted yearly updates to HEW, and continued to operate under the freedom-of-choice plan, which resulted in increasing numbers of African Americans in white schools, both as students and faculty. Nine teachers, including two white women, taught at both the Madison-Mayodan and Charles Drew high schools in the 1966-1967 school year. In that academic year, as well, a total of 82 black students were enrolled in predominantly white schools, up from 46 the previous year. HEW kept up pressure, nevertheless, threatening a compliance review in early 1968 unless, as the Superintendent informed the board, we "make further progress toward the elimination of the dual school system." This final impetus motivated the system on to full desegregation in the fall, following the building use plan they had announced in 1965. In its final year as Drew, the school received as a gift from teacher Betsy Franklin a bust of Dr. Charles R. Drew for that facility's library. In a letter of thanks, the librarian wrote Franklin, "Surprisingly, many of our students were not aware of the great contribution of Dr. Drew and the explanation on the bottom of the statue as well as the statue itself will serve to close that gap." Black

23 "Bundy Is Only Educator on UNC-G Panel," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, May 5, 1966, 1; "Citizens Group Drops Meetings," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, August 11, 1966, 1-2.

citizens in the area were reluctant to give up the school's name of Drew, but final logistics were worked out, and in June 1968, the last separate graduation ceremonies were held for Drew and M-M High students. Geographical zoning was put in place for grades one through six, and improvements were made at system schools in preparation for their newly integrated student bodies. For a four-month period in the crucial school year of 1967-1968, the system was without the services of Bundy, who obtained a leave to complete his doctorate at UNC-Chapel Hill. The energetic superintendent was back at the helm, however, to guide the local schools as they opened in the fall of 1968, as a unitary desegregated system. Bundy reported on the "smoothness of the opening of school" to the board at their September meeting.[24]

The Madison-Mayodan community exhibited a great deal of racial cooperation during the school desegregation process, supporting the use of the former black facility at Drew as the sole junior high school and naming John W. Dillard its principal. A newly constructed and integrated elementary school for the district was also named for Dillard in 1968. Some of the strongest backing for racial integration came from the area's religious leaders. The white pastor of the Madison First Baptist Church had spoken at Beulah Baptist, one of the most active of the African American churches in the area, in

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24 "M-M Schools Take Steps To Meet Federal Guidelines," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, March 10, 1966, 1; "Dual School System Must End," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, March 24, 1966, 1; "Seventy-Six Ask Transfers in M-M School 'Choice of Assignment,'" *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, April 21, 1966, 1; "Teachers Assigned in M-M Schools," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, June 2, 1966; Minutes of Madison-Mayodan City Schools, April 4, 1966; November 7, 1966; July 3, 1967; December 4, 1967; December 20, 1967; February 13, 1968; March 4, 1968; May 6, 1968; August 5, 1968; and September 9, 1968; Bundy, "An Analysis of Desegregation Activities," 113-4; Letter from Phyllis A. Martin to Betsy Ann Franklin, March 11, 1968, Franklin Collection, Box 3, File 87, Rockingham County Historical Collections, Gerald B. James Library, Rockingham Community College, Wentworth, North Carolina; "How It Is With Us in 1968," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, July 4, 1968.

May 1955. A local organization of ministers, the Madison-Mayodan Ministerial Association, made several meaningful efforts to promote the process of quiet, harmonious desegregation. Black and white ministers met together in 1964 to discuss local issues of race. The African American ministers identified "more equality in employment" as the most pressing need. More than a dozen white pastors wrote the school board in May 1965 offering their "cooperation and service" in achieving a transition to a single, desegregated system. The ministerial association also sought to recognize student leadership by offering a medal to the senior in the Madison-Mayodan School system judged to have attained "the highest degree of excellence in the areas of scholarship, citizenship and Christian character and influence." The first year, this award was presented to Charles Drew senior Elizabeth Jane Mitchell, who was headed to Winston-Salem State Teachers College in the fall. A performance by the sixty-five voices of the Charles Drew High School Choir was held at the white First Baptist Church of Madison in spring 1965, co-sponsored by the Madison Methodist and Presbyterian congregations. In addition, in an effort to bring students together, the ministerial association sponsored a series of interracial meetings for teens in a five-day "Youth Week" program in the summer of 1965. The average attendance was about one hundred each evening. The teens were praised for their initiative in participating and told that their new relationships "would help break the ice when students from both races enter school together" in the

fall. The community even started off 1966 with a biracial "Christian Unity Week" sponsored by the ministerial association.[25]

Religious leaders also offered thoughts of racial cooperation in the local newspaper. In a regular column, "The Clergy Speaks," D. Ronald Glover wrote about how the Ku Klux Klan twisted Christian ideas to suit their white supremacist agenda, the result being the exact opposite of Christian principles. By 1965, as the KKK increased its activity in the area, the ministerial association adopted a resolution, wishing "to go on record as expressing regret over recent demonstrations of the Ku Klux Klan, or any other organization, whose method is the burning of crosses, designed to intimidate and deprive citizens of Rockingham County of their civil rights." The next year, Presbyterian minister Angus W. McGregor of Madison made an impassioned plea in the newspaper for the community to reject the claims of the KKK. "The belief that the Caucasian race is superior . . . is not biblically nor scientifically based," he wrote. "The Bible tells us that God made MAN in his image, not just the white man." Look around, he concluded, and it is clear that African Americans "are as capable of just as much moral, intellectual, and cultural achievement as anybody." The close cooperation of whites and blacks in Madison might have been best evidenced when state NAACP president Kelly Alexander came to Madison to speak at the Beulah Baptist Church in December 1965, only a week

25 "Pastor Exchange," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, May 5, 1955; Letter to Madison-Mayodan City Board of Education from Madison-Mayodan Ministerial Association, in Minutes, May 14, 1965; "Negroes Say Job Opportunity Most Pressing Problem," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, April 9, 1964; "Drew Student Given New Award," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, June 4, 1964; "Drew Choir Concert Backed by Churches," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, April 29, 1965; "Race Relations Topic of Youth Week Talks," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, August 12, 1965; "Looking Ahead," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, January 20, 1966.

after his Charlotte home had been bombed. Illustrating the good working relationship of whites and blacks in the community, the white mayor of Madison introduced Alexander, who focused on education, employment, and voting. Mayor Bill Schultz, reflecting on the meeting, said, "I feel that my being invited . . . is indicative of the kind of relations that exist in Madison."[26]

Leaksville

The initial response of the Leaksville Township school leaders to the HEW mandate was less enthusiastic than that of Madison-Mayodan, and the system had a somewhat contentious back-and-forth with federal officials before finally meeting the established goal of eliminating segregated schools in the fall of 1969. Throughout 1964, Superintendent John Hough and his board recorded the same pupil assignment policies as they had for a decade, "according to North Carolina Assignment law," but approved the first transfers under the freedom-of-choice plan in August, when five students left Douglass for other system schools, mainly in the Draper area. Operating a system of close to forty-eight hundred students, 18 percent of whom were African American, the Leaksville district focused from the beginning of the desegregation era on the importance of federal monies that they found essential to maintaining a good educational system. To reject compliance requirements "would deprive the public schools of lunch, . . . vocational and other funds now available and more expected," board chairman Zell Ford, an executive with Spray Cotton Mills, informed the others. Superintendent Hough,

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26 D. Ronald Glover, "The Clergy Speaks," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, January 28, 1965; "For the Preservation of Individual Rights," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, November 18, 1965; Angus W. McGregor, "The Clergy Speaks," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, March 17, 1966; "Alexander Urges Negroes To Assume Responsibility," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, December 9, 1965.

system attorney D. Floyd Osborne, and board member Welsford Bishopric, who was also the chairman of the Board of Trustees of the newly constructed Rockingham Community College, traveled to Raleigh in January 1965 to find out more from state officials about expectations. Receiving further guidance, the board agreed that if federal funds were discontinued, the district's programs "would be hurt substantially fiscally," so they subsequently signed and submitted the HEW Assurance of Compliance form on February 8.[27]

At the same February meeting, Leaksville school leaders listed their building priorities, giving a picture of local long-range plans before HEW pressure prompted changes: construction of a new consolidated junior high for whites, additional land and ten more classrooms for Douglass, which as the system's only facility for African Americans housed students from elementary through high school, and enlargement by twelve classrooms of one of its eight white elementaries—Central, in an area that was seeing population growth. Clearly at this point in early 1965, school leaders in Leaksville did not anticipate more than token racial desegregation. As all racially segregated public school systems had to do for compliance, the Leaksville board crafted a written document evaluating segregation in their district and outlining measures to eliminate it. The first compliance plan, written two months later, showed five black students who attended white schools, claimed a policy of "complete freedom of choice in all grades," and made a strong statement of being able to deny placement requests only in cases of

27 Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, May 11, 1964; July 9, 1964; July 16, 1964; August 10, 1964; October 12, 1964; December 14, 1964; January 11, 1965; and February 8, 1965. The enrollment figures for the first ten days of the 1964-1965 year were 3,917 whites and 861 blacks.

overcrowding, a circumstance to which they referred four different times in the three-page document. As in most other systems, no whites then attended (or would attend) traditionally African American schools during desegregation. Echoing language of "separate but equal," all facilities were "similar," this first compliance plan claimed, and local salaries as well as instructional materials were the same. Revisions to the plan included more descriptions of the segregated black school as "appropriate," boasting "four modern brick buildings," and noting that when "Negro parents requested changes" for the first time the previous summer, "every request," totaling five, "was honored without fanfare or embarrassment." In both versions of the plan, leaders wrote, "The schools enjoy good relations with the people of both races," but in the revision, they added, as proof of racial harmony, that there had been "neither marches, violence nor protests of any kind" in their district. They told HEW officials that they believed parents wanted their children to attend the same schools "that they have been accustomed to." "We cannot do the impossible in one year," they wrote, but anticipated that at a maximum of three to four years they would be able to "fully integrate our unit-wide faculty." They pledged to start having joint black and white faculty meetings immediately. To meet compliance requirements, the Leaksville board agreed to carry out the freedom-of-choice plan of pupil assignment. They explained their procedure would be to publicize their intentions, to send the required applications home with school children, and in timing that was no doubt problematic to federal officials, to expect parents to return the forms within ten days of having received them. This window, of course, was ambiguous depending on when a schoolchild may have presented them to a parent. For the following school year,

however, this method garnered forty-eight transfer applications from black to white schools, twenty of them from Douglass to Morehead High School as sophomores and juniors. Superintendent Hough, upon accepting another two-year term as the district's educational leader, spoke of good race relations in the system and a "strong and dedicated School Board." "Our school family," Hough promised, would be able to "solve seemingly unsurmountable problems" and still improve education for all.[28]

In the next two years, however, the possibility of additional federal funds to make some of these improvements made HEW compliance even more urgent, as the first Head Start classes, with 90 percent funding from Washington, D.C., came to the Leaksville District, and additional federal aid for low-income students became available. Although the district was deemed to have the lowest poverty rate in Rockingham County, with about 11 percent of their students coming from families with annual incomes of less than $2,000, the implementation of desegregation plans and the resulting access to the program would mean nearly $90,000 in federal funds for Leaksville public schools. To secure even more monies, which they hoped to use for a vocational program for low-income junior high school students who would likely not go to college, the board even wrote to United States Senator B. Everette Jordan, asking that their portion of the Title I funds be re-evaluated. They were sure that there were more poor children in their schools than the survey had shown and asked that the money be distributed on a per capita basis.

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28 Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, February 8, 1965; April 12, 1965; and April 20, 1965; "Plan for Compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964," in Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, April 20, 1965. The Tri-Cities were, of course, only a matter of about ten miles from Reidsville and about twenty-five from Danville, Virginia, where there had recently been significant racial tension.

The board wanted to use some of these funds at the new district consolidated junior high then under construction, a school that would "reach into every corner of the township to accommodate approximately 1,200 students." The facility was named for former district superintendent James E. Holmes and was built adjacent to Morehead High School, ultimately creating a large, centrally located campus for all of Leaksville's public school students in grades 7-12.[29]

To manage student transfers for the 1966-67 school year, Leaksville administrators refined the request process in an attempt to satisfy HEW. They sent every student a first-class letter containing the application documents (with required wording from the Office of Civil Rights) and a stamped envelope in which to return the form to school officials. "Even though no individual [on the board] seemed enthusiastic about some of the restrictions and requirements," they wrote, no one "expressed a desire to rebel or create a scene." To follow HEW directives was imperative, although they would much rather have been focusing on the recent achievements of their Morehead High School students, which were outstanding in music, athletics, and debating. Pressure from HEW to desegregate really intensified, however, before the conclusion of the transfer application window on April 22, and as a result, district plans suddenly lurched forward. The decisions made at the April 6, 1966, school board meeting, in fact, marked a turning point in the desegregation process in the Leaksville Township Schools. Superintendent

29 Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, April 20, 1965; May 10, 1965; May 31, 1965; June 14, 1965; July 19, 1965; August 9, 1965; November 8, 1965; December 1, 1965; March 14, 1966; and March 16, 1966. All of the other three school districts in Rockingham County had more than twenty percent of their school population below the poverty line in 1965. Nearly a half million dollars would come into the county through this federal program.

Hough had been advised by HEW that "very few of the school districts had made any real efforts to desegregate." Updated federal guidelines now dictated that school systems had only six months to integrate at least 12 percent of students and faculty in each school. Hough's understanding was that federal authorities now demanded that "the number integrated be doubled or tripled." This requirement would mean, according to the superintendent's calculations, that the Leaksville district would need to move as many as 150 total students in the system and at least one staff member in each school in order to ensure compliance and receipt of federal dollars for the coming year. His remedy to this crisis was not to "delay the inevitable" but to move all Douglass students in grades ten through twelve to Morehead High School in the fall. The board approved this recommendation unanimously. Although Hough affirmed that he had discussed his proposal with school staff, this drastic measure must have come as a surprise to the students and parents of both high schools. Suddenly, Morehead High School became the first fully integrated school in the county, a full two years ahead of any other. Douglass would be holding its final commencement exercises within only a matter of weeks, and if no longer a high school, the school's identity and place in the black community was no doubt seriously altered. Only four black faculty members from Douglass were subsequently transferred to Morehead. The main concern for administrators, however, seemed to be the potential for overcrowding at Morehead, which would now house more than one thousand students.[30]

30 Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, March 16, 1966; April 6, 1966; and March 13, 1967. The Morehead High School glee club and debating team had excelled in recent competitions and the men's basketball team had just won the state championship.

Soon after this quick decision to transfer all Douglass students in three grades to the traditionally white high school, delegations from Douglass appeared with concerns. The process of racial desegregation was no doubt fundamentally supported by much of the black community, but it must have appeared to be taking place on solely white terms. There was mention of transferring a white principal to Douglass, which now housed grades one through nine, and for the long-serving black principal J. W. Womble to be his assistant, but the board named Womble for another term in his same position. A "delegation of Douglass citizens," with its spokesman Dr. J. W. McLaughlin, a professor at Winston-Salem State and the pastor of the large local African American church, brought three agenda items to the board's attention in June 1966: concern about desegregation of staff, re-zoning on a non-racial basis, and the dismissal of a Douglass faculty member. The record does not show the exact content of this group's grievances, but the board chairman did respond to Dr. McLaughlin in a letter saying the teacher they were supporting had not been recommended for rehiring by Principal Womble, and the board had merely followed his evaluation. The next spring, in preparation for an African American delegation's appearance before the board, Superintendent Hough felt it necessary to write members a behind-the-scenes memo. In it, he explained who would be coming to that evening's board meeting—ten representatives of the Tri-City Ministerial Fellowship, led by the same Dr. McLaughlin who had spoken about Douglass concerns earlier. "I do not know who the others will be," Hough wrote. He reminded the board of exactly what measures they had approved regarding desegregation, including moving all Douglass ninth graders in the fall of 1967 to the new Holmes Junior High School, which

would then have an estimated 1,125 students. "Our touchy position," Hough advised them, was "to answer enough questions to keep the public properly informed" but not to "create a scene" or risk being "misinterpreted." The superintendent certainly had a sense of the enormity of the change the board's decisions were making in the community at large.[31]

The delegation did, in fact, bring a serious agenda before the Leaksville school leaders. Apparently not having been informed or consulted about several issues of importance to the black community, they wanted clarification on student transfers, staffing, Head Start, and the Morehead High School prom. As to why Douglass ninth graders were being integrated at Holmes Junior High School, but not the seventh and eighth grade, the explanation was that every school plant in the district except Douglass would be overcrowded in the 1967-68 term and that the new junior high school was filled to capacity. Having the seventh and eighth grades remain at Douglass was a necessity. Grades one through four at Douglass would be housed in the original building, fifth and sixth graders would move into the former high school facility, and the seventh and eighth graders would be taught in the new vocational building there. The board promised more attention to Douglass students, using federal funds for remedial reading and math. As to why the Head Start program that had been at Douglass had been moved, the board explained that federal officials had recommended the transfer to Leaksville Graded. The delegation expressed their concern that the white "assistant" principal working at

31 Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, April 6, 1966; May 10, 1966; June 13, 1966; June 20, 1966 letter; and March 13, 1967.

Douglass "might usurp and take over" the black principal's responsibilities. They were assured that the assistant was there just to help "upgrade" the school's junior high program. The explanation for why the junior-senior prom had been cancelled at Morehead, where all the district's high school students now attended racially integrated classes, was that there was just not sufficient room on campus for the seven hundred who would likely attend the event. Dr. McLaughlin and the Fellowship Committee feared that the prom had been abandoned in order to exclude African Americans but were assured that the school would not support white "private Junior-Senior dances" to be held in place of the yearly tradition. Going forward, black school patrons continued their participation in the desegregation process by being active in the schools and attending board meetings. Douglass PTA members "expressed criticism of compliance practices" in early 1968, and local black leaders, noting the vacant classrooms as enrollment dwindled at Douglass, were present throughout the next year as school officials worked out final plans for integration of the elementary schools. Concerned that the Douglass facility not be abandoned entirely, citizens made suggestions about how it might be utilized as a second junior high school, an intermediate school for the whole system for grades five and six, or as one of several integrated elementary schools.[32]

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32 Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, March 13, 1967; February 12, 1968; July 8, 1968; January 13, 1969; February 10, 1969; March 10, 1969; and May 12, 1969. Dr. McLaughlin was the pastor of the Mt. Sinai Baptist Church in Leaksville. The suggestion that Douglass become an intermediate school came from Ray Endicott, representing the City Human Relations Council. Interestingly, all during these years of the civil rights movement and greater scrutiny, the Leaksville Board had one of their meetings each year at the High Rock Lake home of the superintendent in another county in North Carolina, about eighty miles from the school district. These gatherings, where interested citizens and the press were not in attendance, were usually in addition to regular monthly meetings, but the board did seem to conduct official business there. See, for example, Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, July 31, 1962; July 12, 1963; July 9, 1964; July 15, 1965; and July 14, 1966.

Hough, who often spoke of his primary goals of building strong course offerings, student programs, and a top teaching staff, was clearly becoming frustrated with the time he had to spend on the desegregation process and the pressure local school patrons and HEW were placing on his administration. For compliance, he was "required" to communicate with parents, the media, Raleigh, and Washington constantly, and the repeated submission of very detailed documents acted to "punish our limited office help," he told the Leaksville board in 1967. "I am constantly answering inquiries on the street, public meetings, via telephone, letters, etc.," he wrote. Overcrowding in nearly every school and the serious teacher shortage made school administration an even more difficult challenge. "Given time," Hough conjectured, "our people are prepared to accept total integration," but gradualism was less acceptable to Washington officials and the pressure to comply with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 increased. This frustration was seen in correspondence Hough had with HEW officials after a team of three inspectors came to Rockingham County in the fall of 1967 and subsequently wrote a letter insisting more be done to meet their standards. Hough replied that Leaksville school leaders were "disappointed" by the criticism they continued to face from Washington. "Have you had correspondence or phone calls from local people?" Hough asked. "If so, why not give us the advantage of their views?" Besides, his district had completely integrated all high school students and planned to complete the integration of junior high pupils in September 1968. Under freedom of choice, all elementary schools except Douglass would also be integrated. Why was this not acceptable progress toward desegregation? A somewhat strident reply from Dr. Eloise Severinson, Regional Civil Rights Director,

made HEW's expectations clear. The Leaksville desegregation plan was still "defective." The system had no plan for faculty desegregation other than "transferring qualified teachers" and the Douglass School would "continue to be maintained as a Negro School for grades 1-6." Dr. Severinson brusquely repeated the advice given in two earlier letters. It was Hough's administration's responsibility to eliminate segregated schools "as expeditiously as possible." Severinson provided two specific ways this goal could be achieved: 1) Close four elementary schools—Spray, North Spray, Lakeside and Central--and assign these students to Douglass or 2) Close Douglass entirely and assign the African American students there to the elementary closest to their homes. The first option appeared most "feasible" to the civil rights official, as Douglass had the capacity to house 800 students and currently had only 310. Hough replied with a pledge to develop a plan and to be in full compliance by the opening of the 1969-1970 term.[33]

Two years after the bold move of fully integrating his district's high schools, and after several contentious engagements with HEW officials, Hough further lamented, "There are more teams and more directives coming out of Washington, as well as more court cases pending in our State than ever before." This pressure, however, ultimately resulted in the final consolidation of all students in the Leaksville Township Schools in the fall of 1969. By the time this racial integration had been achieved, the three municipal entities in the Tri-Cities area—Leaksville, Spray, and Draper—had also merged, and the newly named town of Eden was formed. In this time of great change,

33 Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, March 13, 1967; October 10, 1967; May 14, 1968; and June 10, 1968.

the Eden City School Board was able to resolve the desegregation process with a geographical zone plan for the elementary schools. All high school students (grades 10-12) attended Morehead High School and all junior high students (grades 7-9) went to the recently built Holmes Junior High School across the street. Two intermediate schools for grades five and six were designated at Leaksville-Spray and Draper. All other district school plants were utilized as elementary facilities; students in grades one through four were assigned to schools "near where they live" in one of eight zones. The only exception were students in the Blue Creek area of Spray, a historically black section, who, because of overcrowding in North Spray and Spray Graded, were assigned to Central Elementary. Explaining the zones to the public, Hough emphasized that the courts had outlawed "freedom of choice" as a means of desegregation and praised the board and community for making a "reasonable effort" to comply with federal requirements "without creating a scene." This final plan met with little resistance among students and parents, and the 1969-1970 school year got off to a promising start "without any serious problems or friction arising." Local administrators had been most concerned about discontent in the Douglass zone but were relieved by the acceptance of whites in attending a formerly black school. The system even won the praise of Dr. Eloise Severinson at HEW who wrote to Superintendent Hough, commending him for his leadership in "providing an equal educational opportunity for all of the students." The Eden district now operated a "unitary, nonracial school system in which no schools are racially identifiable," the ultimate goal of HEW's desegregation mandates. Having

accomplished system reorganization, Hough vowed to move on, with concentration on "human relations and the improvement of instruction."[34]

Rockingham County

As much of a challenge as desegregation posed for the Madison-Mayodan and Leaksville districts, the other two systems—Rockingham County and Reidsville—faced even more complications in eliminating segregated schools. Reidsville, of course, was operating under court order to desegregate, and this process was carried out with much scrutiny and according to its own timetable. Yet, the rural Rockingham County administrative unit faced a number of organizational challenges that made its transition to a unitary system perhaps even more complex. Superintendent Allan Lewis spoke forthrightly when he told HEW officials that his system's leaders were "sincere in our efforts to comply with the Civil Rights Act" and wanted "to make all the progress that is possible." That progress was indeed slow, however, and ultimately unacceptable to federal inspectors, but the snail's pace was related more to the difficulties of reorganization than avoidance of racial integration. The rural school district had its own distinctive structure and geographical differences when compared to the three city systems in the county, and these characteristics had a significant role in how the system approached the desegregation process and dealt with HEW. Since the establishment of the city systems in the 1920s and 1930s, the Rockingham County unit had been

34 Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, February 10, 1969; August 11, 1969; September 8, 1969; and December 8, 1969; "Eden's Hough Unveils Plan To Zone Schools," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, August 14, 1969, 16; Jack Scism, "Eden School Begin Smoothly," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, September 9, 1969, 29; Jack Scism, "School System in Eden Wins Civil Rights Official's Praise," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, November 11, 1969, 17.

comprised of all the areas "left over" outside the three principal town units. Their district included a large central section and all four "corners" of the county with most of their schools built along country roads. The county system also retained many traditional markers of rural North Carolina education—"union" schools (grades one through twelve) mostly built in the 1920s, a local committee for each white school accustomed to having many prerogatives for oversight, and no high schools for African Americans at all. In addition, the county unit had made few changes in this structure since building the three black elementary schools in the early 1950s. Contributing to the confusion about restructuring schools to eliminate racial segregation were numerous student transfers out of the district and almost constant challenges to district boundaries. At different times in the years of HEW oversight, a number of areas in the county administrative unit sought to leave the system. Because of these factors, when HEW directives were issued, it took the rural system's leaders a bit longer to process just what pace was expected and what verifiable progress would mean. Further complicating the implementation of a unitary system, before 1965 the district had done very little to prepare for racial desegregation.[35]

Because of the new role of the federal government in mandating desegregation, all local school leaders in 1965-1966 seemed to be at a crossroads about future school plans, most uncertain about building programs, repairs, restructuring student attendance policies, and other aspects of school supervision. Accustomed to seeing the county as a whole, Superintendent Allan Lewis took a broad perspective when faced with the first calls for desegregation. Like the other school heads in the county, Lewis had already

35 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, February 14, 1968.

served his system a number of years, twenty at this point, but unlike the other superintendents, he had worked not only on his district's behalf, but also had often acted as the central figure in all the county's schools, as his administration was responsible for a combined budget, frequent meetings with other officials, and the bus system for the entire county. The supervisor for all of Rockingham County's black students, Clarence C. Watkins, also worked out of Lewis's office in Wentworth, as he had done since the 1940s. At this moment, it made sense, Lewis advised the county board, to seek the aid of state school planners and experts. To gain guidance, the system became a member of the Piedmont Association for School Studies, a new entity organized at UNC Greensboro, which would provide professional services and consultation. Lewis also requested that a survey team from Raleigh make a "comprehensive study" of all schools in Rockingham County. In calling for a survey of the county's facilities and projected needs in 1965, Lewis actually set in motion a period of controversy over two issues: one, whether to build a consolidated high school in Wentworth to replace the four "union schools" and, an equally contentious topic, whether to merge all four school systems in the county into one. During the years of increasing HEW oversight about racial desegregation, the Rockingham County superintendent also found himself embroiled in impassioned conversations with leaders and school patrons in many communities about these other issues.[36]

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36 Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, February 8, 1966; Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, March 30, 1965; January 10, 1966; July 11, 1966; September 22, 1966; December 13, 1966; and May 11, 1970. The survey was carried out by a team from the North Carolina Division of School Planning. Allan Lewis served as superintendent of Rockingham County Schools from 1946 to 1970.

It proved to be an especially inopportune time to broach the complicated topic of countywide merger, as all of Rockingham's education leaders were already operating under a cloud of uncertainty in their communities as they attempted to comply with racial desegregation mandates. The catalyst for the conversation on county-wide consolidation was a school survey requested in March 1965. A team of planners visited the county in February of the next year and delivered their recommendations to Lewis seven months later. The committee's broadest proposal was that the four administrative units be merged, a suggestion which the county and Madison-Mayodan systems readily endorsed. The city districts in Leaksville and Reidsville, however, balked at the idea, arguing that they both had supplemental taxes in place, which the other two systems did not have. The Leaksville board strongly opposed consolidation unless something definite about financial support was assured. Madison-Mayodan and the county unit would need to get local supplemental taxes passed in their districts before Leaksville would consent to a merger. To attempt a merger through a "crash program" without sufficient advanced planning, Leaksville leaders said, would weaken Leaksville and Reidsville without helping the other two systems. Because the Leaksville unit seemed so opposed to merger, Lewis floated the idea of having the other three districts combine, leaving Leaksville on its own. No action was taken on this proposal, however. Instead, Superintendent Lewis continued to work with the Madison-Mayodan board about consolidation and the accompanying school tax that was expected. After a negative vote from citizens of the two districts on the special supplemental tax in October 1967, however, the countywide merger effort seemed to come to a standstill, although as a long-term goal, it was

advocated again by the county commissioners as final desegregation plans were being put into place and mentioned by county leaders at many points in succeeding years.[37]

A proposal from the survey team that did move forward was to build a consolidated central facility for the county's rural pupils that would bring together students from Bethany, Stoneville, Ruffin, and Wentworth high schools. Although it was still very much a time of uncertainty, the Rockingham board started plans for the school almost immediately after the survey was delivered. The board authorized Superintendent Lewis to look into getting an outside consultant from a New York firm to help plan the new facility. Meanwhile, local educators worked on a proposed curriculum and visited newly constructed high schools in the area for models. In early 1967, a request for the installation of basketball goals at Bethany was even deferred because of the possibility that this high school would soon be consolidated with others. Plans moved ahead, but not without controversy. Land on which to build the consolidated facility was available at no cost, since the county already had purchased it to extend a water line. Despite "no" votes from members from the western side of the county, the rural school board approved the site in Wentworth by a vote of 3-2, and one hundred acres were turned over to the school

37 Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, September 12, 1966; and November 30, 1966; Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, September 22, 1966; December 13, 1966; February 21, 1967; February 28, 1967; May 29, 1967; and October 2, 1967; Minutes of Madison-Mayodan City Schools, December 5, 1966; February 6, 1967; and February 21, 1967; "Vote Runs 2 to 1 Against School Tax," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, April 6, 1961, 1; "Integration Rises in N. C. and Rockingham County Schools," *The Advisor*, September 1967, 15; "School Officials Meet Tonight To Talk Merger," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, October 31, 1972, 20; Danielle Battaglia, "10 Facts You May Not Know about Rockingham County Schools, *Greensboro* (NC) *News & Record*, February 1, 2015; Rockingham Now, greensboro.com, https://www.greensboro.com/rockingham_now/facts-you-may-not-know-about-rockingham-county-schools/article_2efae4f2-a956-11e4-9216-7b7afac0. The supplemental tax essential to merger failed in the county district 1,689 to 713, and in the Madison-Mayodan area 1,028 against and 633 for the measure. Countywide merger of the four school administrative districts was not accomplished until 1993.

board for construction of the facility. As plans began to solidify regarding location, Stoneville citizens spoke out against the selected site for the new high school, saying it was too far east. Three hundred petitioners signed a document requesting a site further west or, if that was not possible, to allow Stoneville to continue to operate its own high school. The county commissioners also sought to postpone the building of a central high school, arguing that all the twelve hundred county students in grades ten through twelve could be absorbed by the three town facilities. This alternative would cost much less, they said—only about one million dollars for additional classrooms and renovations, as opposed to the ever-increasing budget for building a completely new facility—projected in 1969 to cost at least $2.5 million.[38]

Debate about the proposed new school continued. One consolidated school proponent framed the argument starkly, "You have no choice. You either build the comprehensive high school or you go into the city units." Another supporter of the proposed consolidated school wrote to a Greensboro newspaper, asking "Isn't it about time?" for the school. As evidence, she described the "faded, rotting drapes" in the Ruffin High School auditorium, hanging "in shreds too fragile for the human touch," and argued, "These county people have waited for years, saving and pulling together money to build the school they have so long needed and wanted." "It is rightfully their turn," she concluded. Organized as the Concerned Parents and Taxpayers of Rockingham County, white school patrons soundly rejected the option of high school students joining

38 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, December 13, 1966; February 21, 1967; May 29, 1967; January 8, 1968; March 6, 1969; March 31, 1969; April 14, 1969; and April 24, 1969; Jack Scism, "Survey Stimulated Debate on Schools," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, June 17, 1969, 13.

one of the three city districts, although the same practice had been required of rural black high school students for decades. Swiftly, Parent-Teacher associations at three of the rural high schools affirmed their support for the new consolidated school. A serious sticking point, however, was the reluctance of Stoneville school patrons to consolidate. The final board vote to go ahead with the construction of what would become Rockingham County Senior High School was again 3-2 in June 1969, divided along the same lines. Although county education leaders continued to debate and dream about the possibility of a new state-of-the-art high school as they struggled to get construction costs down, the consolidated building was not completed until nearly a decade later. When the facility was occupied in 1978, Stoneville students remained in their small town school.[39]

These two issues—proposals for countywide merger and a central comprehensive high school—consumed much of the time and effort of Rockingham County district school officials in the HEW compliance era (1965-1969). As a result, there was little focus among leaders of the rural system on what was more immediately expected of them regarding racial desegregation. Until they were strongly pressured by HEW, there was not much attention given by Rockingham County school officials as to how they would

39 Laura Ferguson, "Bethany PTA Studies School Consolidation," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, May 22, 1969, 17; Marilyn Pergerson, "County Schools," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, June 5, 1969, 6; Laura Ferguson, "Bethany PTA Backs School Plan," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, May 28, 1969, 19; Jack Scism, "County Airing School, Money Controversies," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, June 1, 1969, 79; "Stoneville Principal Resigns," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, June 15, 1969, 16; "School Interests Builders," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, July 29, 1975, 26; "Officials To Inspect New County School," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, December 11, 1977; Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, March 17, 1970. When the Stoneville principal resigned in June 1969, he assured the public that his leaving had nothing to do with the new high school controversy. As the construction of a new high school was delayed, the county school board agreed to assist the Ruffin PTA in getting new stage curtains and drapes in March 1970. "A school is a showplace," Rockingham County Superintendent Richard H. Schultz said of the new construction, which was not occupied until 1978.

actually eliminate segregated schools in their district as it was then structured. During these years, the rural system operated nine white elementary schools, four white high schools, and three all-black schools built in the early 1950s for grades one through eight. These schools enrolled approximately fifty-five hundred of the eighteen thousand students in Rockingham County, with the largest school population being in Stoneville. Of the system's approximately two hundred teachers, more than forty were assigned to the Lincoln, Stone, and Roosevelt African American schools. Like leaders in other school districts, the Rockingham officials at first did not seem to understand the extent of federal oversight and specificity that would be demanded of them. In their first dealings with HEW, the county board actually submitted a "Plan of Compliance" before signing the certificate of intent as most other systems did. In 1965, Superintendent Lewis called the form just a "formality" but learned over time that it would be a yearly statement and would require proof of progress toward desegregation. The first document submitted by the Rockingham district had the same stipulations as neighboring Reidsville's initial plan: pupils entering first grade or moving from eighth grade to high school could submit a school choice application. Others would be assigned to the school they were currently attending. As administrators of transportation for all four systems, however, the Rockingham leaders also included in their 1965 plan the promise that "all pupils attending desegregated schools may ride desegregated buses" but did not outline exactly what routes this would involve. To learn more about compliance expectations, board

members, the board's attorney, and the superintendent all attended meetings in 1965 and 1966, gradually coming to terms with what federal entities required.[40]

Like the other school officials in the county in the first years of the compliance process, Rockingham leaders signed the forms of intent, set a month to receive school transfer applications, and, functioning under the freedom-of-choice plan, achieved minimal compliance by trying to move as many black teachers and students as they could into white schools. Yet, without a new high school, which Lewis guaranteed HEW officials would be "completely desegregated," the administrators and elected board did not seem clear about how to restructure their system and their statements about what further steps they would take to desegregate reflected this ambiguity. Directives to employees and missives to HEW contained vague language. For example, when hiring, principals were instructed to "try to get some desegregation," and even as late as 1968 local officials were telling federal inspectors that if allowed one more year to comply, "every effort will be made to encourage more desegregation in the County schools." One factor—that the county system had no black high school students to look to for early transfers into white schools under freedom-of-choice—made desegregation efforts somewhat more difficult. Also, some early transfers of black students from their accustomed schools were reversed. One fifth grader was sent back to Roosevelt from Monroeton at his parents' request. In asking that her daughter be able to move back to Drew, the mother of one tenth-grade student said that the girl was so unhappy at

40 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, May 11, 1965; July 1, 1965; July 12, 1965; March 22, 1966; July 11, 1966; and December 12, 1967; "Assignment Plan for County School System Is Announced," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, May 6, 1965, 3.

Wentworth that she would just stop school if not allowed to return to Madison. Two other African American students were denied the reversal of their transfers, however. Their parents asked for a return to Lincoln from Sadler because of "feelings in the neighborhood—too much tension," but the board turned down their request. Though dealing with many uncertainties, system leaders did attempt to explain their understanding of the desegregation process to the public. To address questions the public might have about desegregation, the county system published a seventeen-point detailed version of their plan in a local newspaper in April 1966. Urging readers to "keep a copy of this notice," school officials outlined the schools available, listed the grades taught in each, and explained the school choice process. They also informed citizens that these choices would be in effect for the entire school term and could not be altered midyear. The system also made early incremental progress toward faculty desegregation. By the 1966-1967 school year, twelve black teachers taught in white schools, but just as in other districts, no white teachers had yet transferred to African American schools.[41]

Each subsequent year, as HEW increased pressure on school officials to specifically outline measurable goals to eliminate segregated schools, a major factor in making desegregation successful was the threat that systems would lose federal funds for noncompliance. Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) increased the leverage HEW might exert through Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, making

41 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, February 1, 1965; October 4, 1965; December 13, 1965; March 22, 1966; July 11, 1966; January 8, 1968; and May 15, 1968; "Assignment Plan for County School System Is Announced," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, May 6, 1965, 3; "Integration Rises in N. C. and Rockingham County Schools," *The Advisor*, September 1967, 15; "Notice of School Desegregation Plan," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, April 6, 1966, 2.

more and more funds an option for systems who qualified. The availability of federal funds was indeed significant, and at each opportunity "getting the aid available" was a goal for the Rockingham County system. Of particular importance for the system were the federal monies for agriculture classes at the four rural high schools. In addition, the district eagerly accepted the Head Start program beginning in 1965, as well as funds for reading and language arts classes for children from low-income families and a work-study program that would supply the system summer maintenance and office workers. The superintendent himself even devised an "innovative" program for which the Rockingham system received federal funds through ESEA and carried out in multiple summers. Combining his interest in camping, the outdoors, and education, Lewis designed a reading camp for grades five, six, and seven to be held at the old Boy Scout facility in Wentworth, Camp Cherokee. The school board even held their August 1969 meeting at the camp, had dinner with campers, and came away very "enthusiastic" about what they had observed. The continued receipt of federal funds for programs such as this one was an effective motivator for compliance.[42]

The Rockingham board made some progress toward student desegregation each year within the freedom-of-choice program. When an "inspection team from the U. S. Office of Education" visited the county schools in late 1967, they complimented the system on their progress—about 25 percent of African American students in the district

42 Jim Bissett, "The Dilemma over Moderates: School Desegregation in Alamance County, North Carolina," *The Journal of Southern History* 81, no. 4 (November 2015): 894; Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, December 7, 1964; April 5, 1965; March 22, 1966; April 4, 1966; December 13, 1966; April 3, 1967; May 29, 1967; July 1, 1968; and August 13, 1969. The camp was later called Camp Saurakee.

then attended formerly all-white schools. By February 1968, Lewis wrote HEW inspectors that 410 of the 1,563 "Negro pupils" in his system were enrolled in desegregated schools, and in another letter in June 1968, predicted that 550 black students would be attending formerly all-white schools in the fall. "We have honestly adhered to this plan [freedom-of-choice] completely," Lewis insisted. Correspondence between Rockingham County school leaders and Kenneth Haddock, Region III HEW Director, became more detailed, as Superintendent Lewis attempted to show desegregation measures accomplished and to explain the barriers to his system's immediate compliance. In a series of letters Lewis described "inter-school visits to promote understanding and friendship among all our schools" and the system's strategy of "encouraging teachers and pupils to choose a school where the race has been different from their own." The seven central office employees—four white and three "non-white professional personnel"—exemplified "good attitudes" in all their interactions, Lewis wrote. "We all work together in all schools and with all teachers, pupils, and parents without regard to race or color." Always cognizant of transportation issues, Lewis took credit for eliminating some dual bus routes as a step toward desegregation. "We want to make progress and eliminate the dual system," Lewis assured Haddock. Instead of the step-by-step plans to desegregate the three all-black schools—Roosevelt, Stone, and Lincoln—that HEW officials demanded, however, county school leaders delineated the numerous barriers they faced in compliance: "space problems," "transportation problems," and "insufficient time." Because of the limited nature of the county system's school plants and without a new consolidated high school, there was just no space in the

high schools for returning the hundreds of black students to the county from city districts. To begin the desegregation process, the county board had in 1966 considered the possibility of having all students completing eighth grade at Lincoln, one of the county's black schools, to attend either Ruffin or Wentworth rather than go into one of the towns for high school. To do so would have required the use of several mobile classrooms, however, and no action was taken. In addition, to effect a desegregation plan, extensive renovations would have to be made at the other rural schools in order to accommodate changes in grade levels served. Over time, the system planned to remodel the union schools to become "elementary centers." Further, the system had plans for a bond issue to assure needed funds for making facility changes and hoped to develop a public relations campaign to solidify public acceptance of desegregation restructuring. They did not want to require large-scale school reassignments that might "upset or confuse the voters" before the bond election. Lewis might also have added that he and his board were carefully dealing with several white communities who for decades had administered their own local schools through strong committees and were fiercely committed to them. Foremost, there was just not enough time to work out the complicated logistics required for all the needed changes within only a matter of weeks. "We do not have sufficient time to find solutions before next August," Lewis wrote in April of 1968. In November, the county system received the news that it had been given one more year to meet HEW standards.[43]

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43 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, April 4, 1966; December 12, 1967; February 14, 1968; April 17, 1968; and June 3, 1968. Neither the bond issue nor the public relations campaign was funded.

One barrier to immediate compliance that county system leaders might have explained more fully to federal authorities, but did not, was the county system's web of complicated pupil assignments as it stood in 1968-1969. This confusing set of circumstances must have been a crucial factor in the inaction of county school officials. Overall, county leaders really could not be sure of exactly which schools and sets of students they were expected to desegregate. As described in earlier sections of this dissertation**,** the rural district was historically faced with changing parameters, as students frequently transferred—mostly out of the district. Hundreds of black pupils went out of the district to high school in one of the three town systems when they reached ninth grade. Others, both white and black, such as those in the Williamsburg and Roosevelt areas who lived closer to town schools than facilities in the rural system, often asked for and received reassignment. In early 1966, Reidsville officials calculated that 579 students from the county district were enrolled in their system's schools and informed the public that they were "formulating plans" to charge tuition for out-of-district pupils. The prospect of having to pay yearly tuition starting in the 1967-1968 school year no doubt prompted some parents to firm up their ties to the county district where they lived. Lewis reported that "many Negro pupils living near Wentworth are changing from Lincoln or Reidsville." At the same time, threats of tuition also moved others to seek formal transfer of their neighborhoods to the Reidsville system. At different times in the late 1960s, representatives of the communities of Port McCoy and Gibbs Road, University Estates, Monroeton, Williamsburg, and the Roosevelt School all approached the county system about leaving to join Reidsville City. In turn, competing groups from some of these

neighborhoods opposed the proposed moves and tried to stop the transfers. One group from Williamsburg even took to the courts to prevent their community from becoming part of the Reidsville school unit. During the years of HEW oversight, with such negotiations ongoing with several areas in the Rockingham County district, it was difficult to know which schools and student groups could be desegregated. Some of these deliberations went on through 1970.[44]

One area left the county system through a less complicated process. As district lines solidified and were more formal as a result of HEW regulations, the Huntsville community nine miles south of Madison requested to leave the county system and join Madison-Mayodan. Their petition was accepted, and a local election was held in May 1969. Although the Huntsville area with its single small school housing grades one-through-eight had voted against consolidating with the town schools in Madison-Mayodan in 1962, seven years later the result was 140 for and 62 against annexation into the M-M district. Already, about seventy Huntsville high school students attended Madison-Mayodan High School. Under the HEW rules, had Huntsville not voted to join Madison-Mayodan, those seventy students would have been transferred back to the county system to avoid M-M losing the $200,000 it was receiving from the federal government. The affirmative vote also meant that the Huntsville School was closed and 240 more pupils left the county system. In addition to issues of enrollment and teacher allotment, when various areas inside county attendance lines left the rural system, there

44 Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, January 10, 1966; March 22, 1966; July 10, 1967; April 17, 1968; September 10, 1968; October 7, 1968; February 10, 1970; May 11, 1970; June 15, 1970; July 6, 1970; August 31, 1970; November 2, 1970; and December 7, 1970.

were also details of property ownership to work out locally. In the case of Huntsville in 1969, the county retained the land and building, which they later sold for $65,500, but books and other equipment were sent with students to Madison-Mayodan.[45]

Despite large numbers of students requesting assignments out of the district, the Rockingham unit was still the largest in the county in terms of student population through 1969, with more than fifty-five hundred enrolled. When HEW stiffened record-keeping requirements, some of the out-of-district traffic was curtailed and pupils were reassigned to the county schools. Madison's Drew School, for example, lost forty-seven students to county high schools for the 1968-69 year (when Madison-Mayodan was accomplishing full integration): thirty-one to Bethany, nine to Stoneville, and seven to Wentworth. As the county system headed toward the fall 1969 deadline that HEW insisted upon for meeting their requirement of eliminating strictly segregated schools, they were still responsible for 31 percent of student enrollment in the county. Even after peeling away large sections of their district to Reidsville and Madison-Mayodan, the rural system had to work out the details of school assignments for 5,514 pupils. The final plan that satisfied HEW directives was presented to the board in May 1969 by Superintendent Lewis and Clarence C. Watkins, who still worked in the schools on behalf of the county's African Americans, but under a new title, school supervisor. Students were assigned by geographical zones. Four high schools were designated at the traditional union schools—

45 Rockingham County Board Minutes, June 4, 1962; November 12, 1968; June 5, 1969; January 19, 1970; and May 18, 1970; Minutes of the Madison-Mayodan City Schools, Sept. 30, 1968; and October 7, 1968; Laura Ferguson, "Huntsville Expected To Vote To Join Madison School Unit," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, May 25, 1969, 27; "Huntsville To Join M-M Unit," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, June 3, 1969, 18; "Teachers, Students Set To Report," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, August 8, 1969, 23. The earlier vote was 193 against, while only 18 voted for the merger.

Bethany, Stoneville, Ruffin and Wentworth. In the Stoneville zone, the former white facility housed grades one through six and nine through twelve, while the former black school—Stone—became a junior high school for grades seven and eight. South of Reidsville in the county's southeast corner, Williamsburg School was designated a school for grades one through four, while nearby Roosevelt School accepted grades five through eight. In the Ruffin area, four different elementary zones for grades one through eight were initially planned for Lincoln, Happy Home, Stadler, and Ruffin but had to be adjusted because of a fire at the Ruffin facility. After the conflagration in June 1969, which destroyed six classrooms in one wing of the school, grades one through six were sent to one of the other three elementary schools in their area. Additional "relocatable" classrooms were required for Bethany and Wentworth, but the county system put in place a workable plan for the 1969-1970 school year. After a final visit from a federal inspector in October 1969, the district board received HEW's official pronouncement: "You are now operating a unitary, nonracial school system." With only the promise of a modern consolidated high school not yet under construction, county leaders had eliminated the dual system and complied with the Civil Rights Act utilizing their existing structures, not those they wished they had.[46]

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46 Minutes of the Madison-Mayodan City Schools, May 6, 1968; Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, December 12, 1967; January 6, 1969; May 12, 1969; July 7, 1969; December 1, 1969; and May 11, 1970. In 1967, the Rockingham County unit had 5,553 students enrolled, 31 percent of the total school population in the county. In January 1969, this number had risen to 5,614. As the county prepared for its second year as a unitary system, 487 students were still enrolled out of district in a city system. Other systems nearby were just as interested in reclaiming their students who were attending school in Rockingham County. As HEW compliance was underway, Caswell County school leaders demanded that Rockingham officials help them get students at Lincoln School back to their home county. See Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, May 30, 1966; and January 9, 1967.

Reidsville

Because their system was under federal court jurisdiction as well as HEW oversight, Reidsville school leaders had a quite complicated path toward eliminating segregated schools. Because 35 percent of the school population in the Reidsville district was African American and a firmly established NAACP organization was determined to follow through in the courts, black citizens had significant leverage in the desegregation negotiations. The suit that would become known as *Ziglar, et al. v. Reidsville Board of Education* was filed in the U.S. Middle District Court more than a year after the hearings of mid-1961, when six black children were denied transfers to white schools near their homes. At the time of the hearings, J. A. Griggs, local NAACP president, told reporters that he was sure the students would "appeal for aid through the legal division of NAACP." They did so, and in November 1962, the parents and guardians of four Reidsville students—three of the original group and the sister of a high school student who had since graduated—brought charges against the local school board. They alleged that system officials were using the North Carolina Pupil Assignment Act (1955) unconstitutionally—to maintain racial segregation. Lawyers argued that three plaintiffs—Herbert Ziglar, Jr., Earl Ray Pass, and Omat Basal Thomas—had exhausted their local remedies, but because of race, had still not been allowed to enroll in their schools of choice. The fourth pupil, Lillian Bell, claimed that she had not gone through the same hearings procedure as the others, as it "would have been useless," because in Reidsville, blacks were "assigned to Negro schools, and whites to white schools." Bell's rationale was based on rulings in two recent cases involving students in Durham and

Caswell counties, both areas with whom African Americans in Reidsville had many ties. In both earlier suits, U. S. District Court Judge Edwin Stanley had ordered local officials to admit black pupils to their requested schools within the current academic year. Two months after the case was filed, the Reidsville system became one of forty-one systems in North Carolina to be desegregated, when Ziglar and Pass were admitted in January 1963 to the white elementary schools they had selected.[47]

From the time the complaint was filed in November 1962 until the final full integration of the Reidsville schools in early 1970, the actions of the district's school officials were under direct oversight of the federal courts. System superintendent C. C. Lipscomb played a less direct role in the desegregation process than did other system heads in the county. Instead, board attorney William McLeod played a key role representing Reidsville in court and at meetings concerning civil rights compliance as well as updating administrators about the civil action *Ziglar et al*. In January 1964, one of McLeod's first tasks for the schools was to craft a desegregation plan, as required by the first consent order issued by the Federal Middle District Court. Although it was demanded by the court and included the phrase "without regard to race or color" multiple times, Reidsville's first desegregation plan was, nevertheless, quite limited. It might even be read as somewhat defiant, since it emphasized that only those students entering the system for the first time would be seen as having a real cause for admission to the

47 "Assignment Changes Denied," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, September 7, 1961, 12; "Reidsville Faces Suit on Schools," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, December 1, 1962, 9; "Gradual Change Began in 1957," *Southern School News* (Nashville, TN: Southern Education Reporting Service), May 1964, 68; "Negroes Attack Use of State Assignment Law in Reidsville," *Southern School News*, December 1962, 6; "Schools Accept Two Negroes at Reidsville," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, January 17, 1963, 11.

"school of their choice." The plan also made it clear that nearly all of the system's more than forty-seven hundred students would be assigned to the schools they had traditionally attended and repeatedly claimed that all requests would be submitted to the school board for "their approval or rejection." It was, in fact, a similar plan to that later adopted in Little Rock, Arkansas, which was judged not to result in significant desegregation and abandoned a year later. This first Reidsville desegregation plan was, nevertheless, found to be acceptable by the plaintiffs and attorneys in the *Ziglar* case, and the document was issued verbatim as a consent order from the U.S. Middle District Court to be followed by the Reidsville public schools in the 1964-1965 school year. Even after the intervention of the court, the Reidsville board did not approve all the African American transfer requests that came to them. In the case of three students in July 1964, the board at first rejected their applications because their forms were not submitted during the designated time frame and also because they apparently claimed that the reason for their transfer was to attend a higher quality school. In response, the Board of Education said that they did not "recognize the educational standards of one school to be superior to those of any other in the Reidsville City School System." Two of the three were again denied transfer from the black to the white junior high the following month since disciplinary issues involving theft had emerged.[48]

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48 Minutes of Reidsville City Schools, January 13, 1964; May 11, 1964; August 17, 1964; September 22, 1964; and January 25, 1965; Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, May 20, 1964; Johanna Miller Lewis, "Implementing *Brown* in Arkansas," in *With All Deliberate Speed: Implementing* Brown v. Board of Education*,* eds. Brian J. Daugherity and Charles C. Bolton (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2008), 14; Consent Order, Herbert Ziglar, Jr., et al. v. Reidsville Board of Education, United States District Court, Middle District, North Carolina, Greensboro Division, Civil Action No. C-226-S-62, March 20, 1964, F. Supp., *Race Relations Law Reporter*, Vanderbilt University School of Law, Law Journal Library, Vol. 9, Issue 1 (1964), 207-208, https://heinonline-org.libproxy.

In the midst of following guidelines of the federal court, the Reidsville district also had to meet the standards established by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. As Reidsville school leaders began to plan new construction on a system junior high school on thirty-eight acres adjacent to Reidsville High School, HEW issued the mid-1965 call for acceptable desegregation plans tied to federal funds. The Board relied on the services of their attorney in these matters just as in the *Ziglar* case. McLeod met with officials in Raleigh and agreed to draw up the required documents. Lawyers in the *Ziglar, et al.* NAACP suit stepped up pressure a few weeks later, with a letter from Charlotte civil rights attorney Julius Chambers outlining the group's concerns about racial equity in hiring and assignment of teachers and principals. The board attorney responded and explained that finding qualified personnel was "very difficult" but that the Board sought to fill all vacancies in a timely manner "without regard to race." McLeod mentioned specifically that there was a current vacancy for a speech therapist, who would serve all students in the system that the Board wanted to fill with a "qualified Negro." He assured Chambers that in the current school year, the system had "lost no negro teachers but, in fact, gained five." In subsequent months, the Board formulated plans that they believed would be in compliance with both HEW and the *Ziglar* civil action. Their lawyer advised

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uncg.edu/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/rarelwre6&id=937&collection= journals &index=journals/rarelwre; Yvonne Baskin, "17 School Districts Still Dickering with HEW," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, August 18, 1969, 15, 19. Reidsville's enrollment for 1963-1964 was 4,735. Board attorney, William F. McLeod, presented the first desegregation plan document to the board in early 1964. The word "entering" was underlined twice to emphasize this distinction among school assignment requests. Of course, the Reidsville system was only one of many North Carolina school districts challenged in court because of their rejection of transfer applications. In August of 1969, there were twenty-nine school administrative units in North Carolina still operating under court order, Reidsville being one.

them to consider employing black teachers in integrated schools, suggesting specifically that they recruit "qualified and competent" African Americans to teach Industrial Arts at Reidsville Junior High School. For the 1966-1967 year, the Board followed up on this proposal, recommending three black female elementary teachers and a black male be assigned to "predominately white schools." Each of the four "had agreed to the assignment willingly," "without coercion or threat." Such were the negotiations during 1965-1966 that led to a second consent order from the Middle District Court.[49]

These results were unacceptable to the litigants in the *Ziglar* suit, who in August 1966 filed a motion with the court to "effectively and expeditiously desegregate" the Reidsville schools. Arguing that very little progress had been made under the earlier approved plans, the plaintiffs gave as evidence data that only ninety-three, or 4.8 percent, of African American students in the system had been assigned to white schools, and that no real progress had been made in faculty integration. "With the exception of four teachers," they argued, "white teachers are still assigned to white schools and Negro teachers are still assigned to Negro schools." They asked the court to order the Reidsville administration to correct the "inadequacies" of their plan, even calling for the elimination of segregation in all student activities, including athletics. On December 16, 1966, the federal court issued a consent order approving a more detailed desegregation plan that included specific policies for both student and faculty assignment as well as examples of the application forms to be used. All students were to be afforded the opportunity to

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49 Minutes of Reidsville City Schools, April 13, 1964; March 22, 1965; April 12, 1965; September 13, 1965; April 4, 1966; and June 13, 1966; Letter from William F. McLeod to Julius L. Chambers, September 18, 1965, in Minutes of Reidsville City Schools, September 13, 1965.

choose their schools each April, and faculty were to be dealt with "in the best interest of the school system without any consideration of their race or color." In subsequent months, the Reidsville board heeded the fundamental directives of the court, conducting enrollment on the designated schedule and issuing more approvals for student transfers, recorded in long lists of pupil assignments, school by school, "according to the choices indicated on the individual choice form." To make a point that they were tracking all pupil assignments, board minutes listed numerous students who were entering one of the black schools for the first time or were transferring from one African American school to another. Monthly, the board voted to approve pupil assignments, "as requested by each student."[50]

Throughout 1968, African American citizens in Reidsville continued to keep a close watch on their community schools and on the desegregation process. Moss Street PTA members appeared before the board with concerns about locker rooms and showers, as well as problem drainage around the school. A similar PTA committee from Washington High school came only days after Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination to request assistance with some modest improvements to their school. When the closure of one of the three historically black schools in the Reidsville system—Branch Street—was announced in the spring of 1968, however, many local African American leaders did not seem to have been consulted. This major move in restructuring the Reidsville schools

50 Hugh Page, "Desegregation Suit Motion Filed Here," *Greensboro* (NC) *Record*, August 10, 1966, 1; Consent Order, Herbert Ziglar, Jr., et al. v. Reidsville Board of Education, United States District Court, Middle District, North Carolina, Greensboro Division, Civil Action No. C-226-S-62 and C-226-G-66, December 16, 1966, *Race Relations Law Reporter*, Vanderbilt University School of Law, Law Journal Library, Vol. 9, Issue 1 (1964), 823-5; Minutes of Reidsville City Schools, May 8, 1967; October 9, 1967; December 11, 1967; and June 3, 1968.

took place at the end of the school year. Students who had attended this school would, "according to the procedure of the freedom of choice plan," be able to enroll at one of the "five remaining elementary schools." The traditionally black Moss Street School, which had been recently constructed, was reorganized to house grades one through six, while the black high school, Booker T. Washington, was again to accept seventh and eighth graders. Pupils from Moss Street in these two grades could choose either Washington or the Reidsville Junior High School.[51]

After the announcement of the Branch Street closure, black community leaders appeared before the board frequently to gain clarification and discuss plans. No doubt, some consultation with black educators took place as changes such as school closures were carried out, but other leading members of the African American community, such as James A. Griggs, NAACP president, did not seem to be aware of long-term plans for building use or student assignment. When Griggs attended a summer board meeting along with other black citizens to air their concerns, they were described as a "committee representing a group of Negroes" in the minutes. Certainly, the Superintendent and board members knew of Griggs's role as leader of the local NAACP, which had brought the federal court case against the system and whose lawyers continued to negotiate to bring about the original purpose of the suit: "to desegregate the public schools of Reidsville, North Carolina." The goal of dismantling Jim Crow segregation in the schools was within sight, but black leaders were just learning about proposed changes and were concerned about the "future use" of their historically black facilities and the fate of black

51 Minutes of Reidsville City Schools, February 19, 1968; March 11, 1968; and April 8, 1968.

teachers and principals in the restructuring. Much like the African American citizens of Hyde County, North Carolina, studied by historian David Cecelski, Reidsville school patrons did not want to see all of their community school facilities, which had meant so much to them over decades, closed up and abandoned. At the June 1968 meeting, concerned citizens were assured that the Branch Street principal and teachers "would be retained in the school system." Then when black representatives returned the next month to get clarification on school reorganization, for the first time, the plans were made public: the Branch Street building would be used for storage and offices; the two high schools, black and white, would be consolidated at the Reidsville Senior High facility, beginning with the 1969-1970 school year; the former Washington High School site would ultimately become an intermediate school when facilities were reorganized after a state-supported kindergarten program was established.[52]

As they prepared for the 1969-1970 school year, Reidsville education officials operated under plans approved by the federal district court in May. The system would be able to fully integrate grades six through twelve, they told the court, but would need more time to accomplish the same at the district's elementary schools. Noting that in the *Green v. Kent County* case of May 1968, the U. S. Supreme Court had deemed freedom

52 Minutes of Reidsville City Schools, June 10, 1968; July 8, 1968; and July 29, 1968; Herbert Ziglar, Jr., et al. v. Reidsville Board of Education, United States District Court, Middle District, North Carolina, Greensboro Division, Civil Action No. C-226-S-62, March 20, 1964, F. Supp., *Race Relations Law Reporter*, Vanderbilt University School of Law, Law Journal Library, Vol. 9, Issue 1 (1964), 207; "News Release: J. A. Griggs Resigns as President of the Reidsville Association for the Advancement of Colored People," (1972), NAACP files, archived at Elm Grove Baptist Church, Reidsville, NC; See David S. Cecelski, *Along Freedom Road: Hyde County, North Carolina, and the Fate of Black Schools in the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994). James Arthur Griggs served as president of the Reidsville Branch of the NAACP from 1958 to 1972.

of choice plans unacceptable, Judge Edwin Stanley nevertheless extended both Reidsville's and Durham's "Free Choice" plans for another year, designating complete desegregation for grades one through five by the beginning of the 1970-71 academic year. Stanley even praised Reidsville officials, saying, "The board is acting in utmost good faith and its submitted plan has real prospects for dismantling a dual system." The subsequent Reidsville desegregation plan for the 1969-1970 year involved much repurposing of school facilities and renaming of schools. Booker T. Washington High School, which had been a bulwark of the black community since the early 1920s, was closed. At the final Washington commencement in May, the school graduated 130 and marked the occasion with a pageant titled "Alma Mater—Past and Present." All high school students (grades 10-12) were assigned to Reidsville High School, and the Washington facility was renamed Reidsville Junior High and designated to house all eighth and ninth graders. The old junior high building on Franklin Street was renamed Reidsville Middle School, where more than eight hundred sixth and seventh graders were assigned. Five elementary schools welcomed nearly two thousand students in the lower grades, 35 percent of whom were African American. Only one black principal was at the helm of a Reidsville school—Ed Townes, entering his seventh year as principal at Moss Street. Former Booker T. Washington principal, H. K. Griggs, was named an assistant to E. C. Anderson at the consolidated Reidsville High School, which had a student body of 1,250. As schools opened in the fall of 1969, the local newspaper asserted, "This will be

one of the most significant years in Reidsville history" because of the "total integration of the schools."[53]

The school year was certainly a turning point in local history, but the federal court intervened to question the concept that Reidsville had achieved "total" integration. The Supreme Court's *Alexander v. Holmes* ruling of September 1969 had ordered that all public school systems "terminate dual school systems at once and to operate now and hereafter only unitary schools." This decision effectively brought the *Ziglar* case to its culmination, as it was bundled with others from Statesville and Durham, as well as two cases from Virginia. At this point the NAACP petitioned the court for the immediate integration of schools. Board attorney McLeod represented the system in Richmond before the Fourth Circuit of Appeals, arguing that Reidsville no longer had a dual system. At issue, however, was the final school in Rockingham County with an all-black student population—Moss Street Elementary. The court found that the desegregation of the local schools was, indeed, incomplete and on December 2 ordered that the Reidsville board submit plans to complete the process by December 31. Ending a "six-year battle" between the school board and the NAACP in the courts, the ruling put the Reidsville board in the position of having to restructure attendance lines and bus routes for the elementary schools in the middle of a school year. Superintendent C. C. Lipscomb expressed his disappointment with the decision, warning, "I think the harm which would

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53 "Reidsville, Durham Free Choice Plans Extended a Year," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, May 7, 1969, 16; Laura Ferguson, "Eight High Schools To Graduate 992," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, May 20, 1969, 17; Jack Scism, "Biracial Pupil Unit Asks Fair Representation," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, August 6, 1969, 15; Mark Whicker, "City Schools To Open Wednesday," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, August 22, 1969, 1; C. A. Paul, "Reidsville Files New School Plan," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, December 9, 1969, 15; Minutes of Reidsville City Schools, April 16, 1969.

result to our students from the disruption of our system outweighs the possible benefits of integration now." The system had to move forward with the changes, however, and, after considering pairing some schools and closing others, the board was able to keep all five elementary schools open, putting into use a geographical zoning plan they had devised earlier. Five zones named for the five elementary schools involved were defined and publicized over the holiday break. When school started back in January 1970, about five hundred elementary students had to change schools, one of every four in the system, and many had to ride different buses. Five teachers also had to change schools and the Christmas holidays were extended until January 6 to allow more time to implement the plan. There were, however, fewer problems than many had anticipated, with only thirty-four families filing hardship cases to prevent reassignments. The community had been able to avoid the "harsh result" they feared—serious disruption of education in classrooms all over the district as full integration of the Reidsville City Schools was finally accomplished in January of 1970.[54]

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54 *Nesbit v. Statesville City Board of Education,* No. 13229. No. 13582. No. 13583. No. 13626. No. 13803. 418F2d 1040 United States Court of Appeals Fourth Circuit**,** December 2, 1969, *Justia US Law,* https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/appellate-courts/F2/418/1040/294484/ 418 F.2d 1040; Joe McNulty, "NAACP Move Didn't Surprise Lipscomb," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, November 6, 1969, 21; Joe McNulty, "Reidsville School Board Ordered To Answer Petition of NAACP," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, November 11, 1969, 17; C. A. Paul, "Reidsville Files New School Plan," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, December 9, 1969, 15; Joe McNulty, "Reidsville Schools Adopt Zoning Plan," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, December 5, 1969, 10; "Many Will Ride Different Buses," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, December 19, 1969, 13; Dave Gilbert, "Schools Reorganization Set for Discussion at School Board Meeting," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, December 17, 1969, 1; Dave Gilbert, "Reidsville Board of Education Reviews Reassignment Requests," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, December 19, 1969, 1; "Reidsville, Durham Free Choice Plans Extended a Year," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, May 7, 1969, 16. Durham County was also directed to complete the integration of its elementary schools in this order. Judge Stanley had been reluctant to order a sudden and complete integration for the lower grades, believing the school system needed the year's extension in order to allow the plan to work and avoid a "harsh result."

Conclusion

In the immediate aftermath of eliminating the last segregated school in any system in Rockingham County, black teachers and principals largely kept their positions. Key roles for black high school principals in Madison and Reidsville marked the transition period. John Dillard stayed right where he was as principal of the system's only junior high school and the school with the largest enrollment, now housed in the former Charles R. Drew facility. A new elementary built in the Madison-Mayodan district in 1968 was even named for Dillard, but he never served as its helm, remaining at M-M Junior High. The Booker T. Washington principal, H. K. Griggs moved to the now desegregated Reidsville High School as assistant principal. The long-serving white principal, E. C. Anderson, however, resigned after only one year in that post, and Griggs moved to the principalship.[55]

In the early 1970s, white leadership in each of the public school districts significantly changed. Three of the four systems' long-serving school superintendents who had led their districts through desegregation resigned or retired in the early years of

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55 *The Cougar*, Madison-Mayodan Junior High School, Yearbook, 1970, 5; Minutes of Madison-Mayodan Schools, May 6, 1968; and August 5, 1968; "Dillard Transfer Protested," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, May 9, 1974, 1; Justyn Melrose, "School Board Decides New Name for NewVision-Dillard Merged School," *RockinghamNow*, https://www.greensboro.com/rockingham_now; Rick Neal, "Four Rockingham School Systems Making Final Fall Preparations," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, August 16, 1970; Joe McNulty, "Principal Named at Reidsville High," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, June 12, 1970, 15; Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Educational Directory of North Carolina*, 1967-1968, 1968-1969, 1969-1970, and 1970-1971, "Rockingham County," pages 93-94, 94-95, 77-78, and 86-87, respectively, North Carolina Digital Collections, Department of Cultural Resources, http://digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm/ref/collection/p249901coll22/id/208088. For information on black administrators and school board members in North Carolina schools, see Sarah Caroline Thuesen, *Greater Than Equal: African American Struggles for Schools and Citizenship in North Carolina, 1919-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013). In 2018, with support from the public, the Rockingham County School system chose to maintain the use of the black principal's name in a merged school, naming it the John W. Dillard Academy.

integration. Bundy, Lewis, and Hough all had resigned from their positions by 1971. Leadership of the four school systems had dealt with some serious controversies during the late 1960s, but all had successfully guided their systems to eliminate segregated schools. Also, in Madison-Mayodan, industrialist Dalton L. McMichael resigned from the school board in December 1968, just as the system was accomplishing its goal of eliminating segregated schools. He had been chairman for fifteen years and his leadership was crucial to the success of desegregation in western Rockingham County.[56]

As students came together in the early years of integration, several factors determined how the transition would go. Desegregation in the lower grades was accomplished classroom by classroom and relied on the racial understanding of teachers to grasp the depth of the societal change everyone was undergoing and accommodate these demands in their own classrooms. Here, the sensitivity training of Madison-Mayodan's desegregation institutes stood out as an effective strategy for preparing faculty and staff for integrated classrooms. High schools had more of a challenge in desegregation as they dealt with older students who changed classes hourly, met in the hallways and at after-school activities, and had much more interaction between the races. One important aspect of desegregation was to determine policies that would guide student activities, including athletics, assuring racial equity. The identities of the three long-established black high schools that meant so much to their African American

56 Jack Scism, "Hough To Retire June 30; Pressley New Superintendent," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, May 11, 1970, 19; Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, May 11, 1970; Minutes of Madison-Mayodan City Schools, December 2, 1968; January 13, 1969; and August 17, 1971, V. Mayo Bundy letter of resignation. The board selected another textile executive, Edward Mooney, Jr., as McMichael's replacement.

communities were in many ways lost in the desegregation process. All of the physical buildings were utilized in the desegregated systems, but all three had to give up their mascots and school colors in the merger. Only in Reidsville did both black and white schools abandon their former symbols and take on a new identity. The Reidsville school leaders, in a district with the largest black enrollment in the county and a town with a long history of African American activism, understood the importance of involving students and community members of both races. In this period of transition, they utilized a large committee of students and faculty to negotiate many difficult matters. To resolve some issues before coming together in the fall, a biracial committee of six white and six black high school students worked at a series of meetings to determine how student elections would be held and how the homecoming queen and her court would be selected. They also agreed on the new school colors, a combination of the blue and white of Washington and the gold of Reidsville. For a mascot they chose the ram, since, as one committee member explained, it was "impossible to cross Booker T's bulldog with Reidsville's lion." In Madison-Mayodan and Eden, the high school teams played under the colors and mascots of the former white schools, the M-M Falcons and the Morehead Panthers. Athletic programs at the integrated high schools across the county were fully active in the early 1970s and saw a good deal of success in state competition.[57]

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57 Jack Scism, "Biracial Pupil Unit Asks Fair Representation," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, August 6, 1969, 15; "Black Panthers Top Undefeated Mt. Airy," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, January 24, 1963, 7; "Bearcats Drop Game Saturday to Reidsville, *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, April 23, 1953; Doug Trantham, "Black Panthers Prowl To Beat Eastern Alamance 85-50," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, January 12, 1966, 1; Doug Trantham, "Douglass Bearcats Plagued by Disadvantage of Height," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, January 5, 1966, 2. The blue and gold Drew Eagles became the light blue and white Madison-Mayodan Falcons, while the merged schools in Eden played as the red, black, and white Morehead Panthers. In Eden, Douglass High School last played under their mascot the Bearcats in the 1966 school year.

Although they were sometimes slow to meet HEW requirements, after expectations were made clear, the local school boards of Rockingham County gave good faith efforts overall to make progress toward desegregation. They were dealing with a public long accustomed to running their own neighborhood schools segregated by race and, in some ways, had more difficulty in merging some white community schools than in bringing together whites and blacks in classrooms. County school leaders were operating under the vague instructions of federal authorities and for over a decade had had to do virtually nothing toward desegregation until HEW tied federal funds to compliance. Also, there remained some very real opposition to integrated schools. Conservative attitudes galvanized and many feared the liberalism they saw in new programs implemented in local classrooms. In general, whites became more wary of federal civil rights mandates as the decade closed, as any further gradualism was deemed unacceptable, busing was approved as a means of integration in *Swann v. Mecklenburg*, and black activism seemed more aggressive and threatening to many white Southerners.[58]

School leaders, however, were largely open to new possibilities for restructuring local education and took several different actions to put into practice new federal programs, even as HEW communicated its compliance requirements to public school officials. The Reidsville board sought the services of the North Carolina Division of School Planning in studying their facilities and making long-range plans. Like the

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Morehead teams played as the "Black Panthers" as late as 1966 but appeared to drop the use of the adjective, as Douglass students transferred to their school and black activism became more visible.

58 For a thorough analysis of the *Swann* ruling and its implementation in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg system, see Davison M. Douglas, *Reading, Writing, and Race: The Desegregation of the Charlotte Schools* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

Madison-Mayodan unit, Reidsville leaders also started a program for the "exceptionally talented." Similar to the magnet school concept of later decades, such enrichment programs aided schools in retaining students who might otherwise have considered transferring. Reidsville officials also sent the superintendent and a principal to Milwaukee to study an "ungraded" primary program there, and the Rockingham board sent their superintendent to New England to gain information about "new educational practices." To many, the solution to the maddening mix of federal mandates, student transfers, multiple budgets, and crisscrossing bus routes seemed to be a merger of the four geographical systems into one. Because two of the four districts lacked supplementary taxes, some resisted this plan. Other opponents no doubt feared that local control through their individual school boards would be forfeited in a county merger. In all the busyness of the late 1960s, consolidation efforts were lost in the complications of compliance as desegregation mandates were finally enforced. The four school districts had far too much to deal with to tackle merger of their systems. The issue would arise again, however, many times in the next two decades.[59]

The need for continued federal funds and the increasing pressure exerted by local activists and civil rights enforcement officials ultimately created change in Rockingham County schools. The demands of HEW officials were strict in demanding compliance with their desegregation mandate. All four school systems in the county were challenged to show significant change to enrollment and faculty integration and at times met

59 Reidsville City Board Minutes, January 13, 1964; February 11, 1963; and February 10, 1964; Rockingham County Board Minutes, October 3, 1966.

significant barriers and stumbled in the process. Perhaps surprisingly, it was at the elementary level that the elimination of the segregated system was most difficult. In both Leaksville (Eden) and Reidsville, the junior and senior high grades were merged racially according to federal guidelines. However, in each of these units, the largest towns in the county, there remained a traditional black elementary school in isolation. No white elementary students were assigned to Douglass in Eden until 1969, and none to Reidsville's Moss Street until after the *Alexander v. Holmes* decision and a subsequent court order. Favorable factors in the Madison-Mayodan area allowed the school system there to eliminate segregated schools a year ahead of the other three systems in the county. Local leadership was significant, especially that of a progressive superintendent, black community leaders, the school board, and its longtime chairman and textile employer, Dalton L. McMichael. Key leadership in this western district, the smallest of the four in the county, combined with economic prosperity, support from local media and the clergy, and the measured actions of parents, teachers, and students to create a favorable environment for school desegregation. In all the districts of the county, well-intentioned community leaders sought a gradual way to eliminate segregated schools. Although early interactions with HEW resulted in very little change in student or faculty assignments, over time school leaders realized that federal authorities were serious. Compliance (and retaining needed federal funds) would require multiple written plans with increasing specificity and some measurable actions toward desegregation. All four school systems ultimately responded to HEW and court pressure to desegregate and made some incremental progress under the freedom-of-choice plan. Even as federal leverage

and directives intensified, it was a time of transition, but not turmoil, when positive change was facilitated and desegregation was “worked out locally.”

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION: RACE, EDUCATION, AND LEADERSHIP IN ROCKINGHAM COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA, 1820-1970

Focusing on local leadership, a close examination of race and education in Rockingham County from 1820 to 1970 provides several important insights. First, this local history reveals how the public school system was built and operated in one North Carolina county, where, influenced by state and federal leaders over a century and a half, citizens "worked out locally" a framework of schools that ultimately afforded their children and youth equitable access to education. Second, all the work of building and maintaining this school system took place within the context of broad and often troubling issues of race, influenced by those who sought reconciliation of blacks and whites as well as those who deepened racial division. A local history such as this one affords us an opportunity to see how the South's difficult racial past affected people at the grassroots level—in their community schools. Finally, this study illuminates a century of agency and activism on the part of the county's black community. African Americans were leaders as they helped create their own educational spaces, maintained and improved segregated institutions, chipped away at Jim Crow restrictions, and exerted as much leverage as they could to desegregate the local public schools. This long and persistent grassroots involvement was a significant part of the black freedom struggle. The efforts of local leaders who sought adequate educational opportunities for their own children led

to the betterment of schools for both blacks and whites and ultimately to a more equitable society.

Building Public Schools

Leadership at the local level was key to establishing and maintaining schools for thousands of students, white and black, and race was consistently a crucial factor in the development of education in the county. White citizens generally had some opportunities for formal schooling as early as the 1820s when private academies were opened in the county and the first public school in North Carolina was established in 1840 in the Williamsburg community. Private education flourished again for whites around the turn of the twentieth century when a number of respected institutions for males and females operated in the area, but public schools were the key, of course, to providing education for most citizens, although factors of geography and race largely determined access and the quality of the schooling students received. Building any kind of public school system took mighty effort and commitment, and the process was significantly shaped by white school officials who wielded the power to facilitate or obstruct educational policies. A legacy of one hundred years of white leadership from local administrators and school boards reveals people who largely acted in good faith in the hard work of building and maintaining educational systems for Rockingham County citizens. The local school committee structure in rural schools advantaged whites in those communities by developing an additional network of leaders across the county who were committed to the success of their community schools. Those appointed to local school committees were acknowledged leaders of each area and had a true measure of authority in overseeing

each individual school, sometimes even having the freedom to hire personnel. The basic framework of the public schools, however, was paradoxical. The presence of four separate geographical school units in Rockingham County created competition for resources and redundancy of programs, and the resulting system overall was inefficient. At the same time, this decentralized structure allowed local control of schools, generated support for education in each community, and encouraged local people to improve their schools and assure their success. Racial separation as a legally mandated and socially required component of the educational system made the already inefficient operation of the local schools exponentially more cumbersome. Chapter 4 of this dissertation makes this point in examining the many challenges of maintaining local schools in times of economic depression, war, and Jim Crow segregation. Although African Americans were able to establish some strong schools during segregation, operating a racially segregated school district (not to mention four of them within one county) was extremely inefficient, creating a truly unwieldy system increasingly marked by inequities.

The leadership of white school superintendents was particularly important in the development of the Rockingham County schools. Much was required of school leaders, and glimpses into the work of school superintendents and other administrators show leadership that overall was significant and positive. Four superintendents, in particular, stand out for their contributions to expanding educational opportunity for both races. In the 1880s, the first superintendent of the county schools, N. S. Smith, helped assure the survival of public schools in the area with his unrelenting focus on training teachers of both races. In these early years, qualified teachers were few, and Smith carried out a

campaign to increase their number and the level of their scholarship. “If our common School System is to be built up,” he said, “it must be done by our teachers.”[1] To fortify his teaching staff, Smith held week-long summer training institutes and implemented his own written exams for certification. In the 1910s and 1920s, county superintendent L. N. Hickerson was instrumental in bettering local schools in several ways. He encouraged voters to adopt special tax districts to generate needed funds for their community schools, campaigned for significant improvements in rural education, and oversaw early consolidation of white schools. In addition, Hickerson’s advocacy with Rosenwald officials was truly a cooperative effort with local black citizens that resulted in opening schools for some poor, isolated communities.

Another outstanding superintendent, J. C. Colley, the leader of the county system in the early 1940s, demonstrated the effectiveness of professional educators who seek to understand more fully the histories of the communities in which they work and the environments of the students they serve. Colley’s detailed survey of the rural black schools in his jurisdiction was a part of his graduate studies at the University of North Carolina. In his study, he acknowledged the inequities that had developed in the rural schools and documented them. His assessment of the many substandard black schools across the county subsequently spurred action and consolidation. Finally, in the 1960s, Madison-Mayodan Superintendent V. Mayo Bundy proved to be an able, progressive leader at a crucial moment in the history of the local schools. He showed sensitivity to

1 “Superintendent’s Report to the Board of Education of Rockingham County for the Year ending 30th November 1882,” Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, January 1883.

"working out locally" desegregation plans, understanding that this enormous change for southern society was going to take place student by student with individual teachers in each classroom across his district. His facilitation of faculty training through the desegregation institutes showed that he understood the complexities of race relations and African American history and that he anticipated change rather than being reactionary. The HEW mandates gave him the opportunity to help bring about the changes he desired, goals that he spoke publicly about and viewed as morally right. His intentional movements to guide the western district toward desegregation and racial equity showed the effectiveness of incremental change and how a local school superintendent could be instrumental in effecting reform.[2]

This research project also shows that the intersection of education, race, and politics at the state and federal levels mattered in Rockingham County. It is not always clear that policies crafted in the state or national capital actually make a distinct difference at the grassroots level. This local study, however, reveals that state leadership had a particular significance for Rockingham County, as local officials followed the guidance and mandates of North Carolina political and school leaders quite closely at crucial points in its educational history. This influence was especially clear in the Reconstruction era. One of the contributions this local history makes to the existing scholarship is its analysis of how the first public school houses were built in the county in the 1870s and 1880s, a little-studied period. Establishing the importance of the 1868

2 "Dr. V. M. Bundy Retires," *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, May 19, 1982, 31. After leaving Rockingham County in 1971, Bundy became head of the Social and Behavioral Sciences Department at Bennett College, the historically black institution for women, where he taught until his retirement in 1982.

North Carolina Constitution in fostering public schools, research reveals that local school leaders interpreted its mandate to provide "a general and uniform system of Public Schools" to mean that they were obligated to survey and lay out school districts and then obtain or build school houses for all the potential students within them.[3] A system of local public schools developed for both races as a result of the meticulous way the people of Rockingham County marked off districts—nearly forty of them—and then seriously tried over several years to build a school house for each race in every one. This early activity required of district school committees also explains how the wide network of schools and school leaders in nearly every part of the county developed, becoming a firm foundation for the further spread of educational opportunity. State leadership and policies were also very crucial in Rockingham County education in the Charles Aycock era, when the governor came multiple times to the county to encourage the expansion of white schooling and in the next decades, when the state-administered Rosenwald program was effectively utilized to foster black education. In addition to the beginnings of the public schools in the 1870s and 1880s, the point at which state leaders influenced local education policy most was the crucial time after the *Brown* decision, when instead of acceptance, the county and state were led to defy the court and maintain segregation. Governor Terry Sanford's more moderate leadership aimed to ease racial tensions also had some influence on local developments in early 1960s, as a Good Neighbor Council

3 Article IX, "Education," "North Carolina 1868 Constitution," 863, *North Carolina Constitutions,* North Carolina Legislative Library, http://www.ncleg.net/library/Documents/Constitution_1868.pdf.

was formed and white moderates in the county echoed Sanford's conciliatory rhetoric and actions.

Finally, the statewide initiative to build a community college system was a measure that had particular significance for local education. In fact, the seeds of the community college were sown in the county over many decades. In the Tri-Cities area, there was historically a strong commitment to basic literacy, workplace preparation, and vocational education. Literacy classes for local workers in the 1930s grew into vocational classes sponsored by local manufacturers in the 1940s and 1950s. When Leaksville was selected as the site of one of the state-sponsored vocational centers in the late 1950s, the facilities and offerings of the school were further enhanced. In its eighth and final year of operation, the Leaksville-Rockingham County Industrial Education Center awarded fifty certificates to those completing a two-year program in areas such as mechanical drafting, auto mechanics, machine shop, and cosmetology. These endeavors were transferred into the campaign to build Rockingham Community College (RCC), which unified county citizens. The first president of RCC, Dr. Gerald B. James, praised county citizens for their commitment and the first twelve trustees for their leadership and skillful planning. "The citizens of Rockingham County made a basic decision: we want a college and are willing to pay our share of the cost," James said at the groundbreaking ceremony. When the college opened in 1966, it did so as a racially integrated institution,

truly a symbol of extended educational opportunities for county citizens, both white and black.[4]

In the mid-twentieth century, state guidance was superseded by federal oversight to further influence how schools developed locally. Historian Jim Bissett, in his study of two other North Carolina school systems—Burlington City and Alamance County—has assessed the era of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) oversight (1965-1970) as ineffective in compelling compliance, allowing the white resistance of "extensive bureaucratic and legal maneuvering" to continue into the decade following the Civil Rights Acts of 1964.[5] However, in the debate about the effectiveness of federal arm-twisting in bringing about school desegregation, this study of how the four school systems dealt with the HEW mandates reveals that the requirements issued by the U.S. Office of Education brought about meaningful desegregation in Rockingham County. The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights acknowledged in 1967 that a lack of manpower made it difficult to enforce standards in every district, but evidence from Rockingham County reveals that federal authorities followed through with each of the county's administrative units.[6] Tying increasingly available federal funds to compliance and the

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4 "Fifty IEC Students To Get Diplomas In Final Graduation," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, June 29, 1966, 1; "Ground Broken on New College in Impressive Ceremonies," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, January 12, 1966, 1; Rockingham Community College, "Our History," http://www.rockinghamcc.edu/about/history. On the vocational school and Rockingham Community College, see Minutes of Leaksville Township Schools, July 19, 1937, January 12, 1950, May 13, 1954, August 6, 1956, March 10, 1958, January 11, 1960, May 9, 1960, July 11, 1960, and October 8, 1962; and Minutes of Rockingham County Schools, January 10, 1966.

5 Jim Bissett, "The Dilemma over Moderates: School Desegregation in Alamance County, North Carolina," *Journal of Southern History* 81, no. 4 (November 2015): 904-905, 914, 917, 928-9.

6 U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, "Press Release," August 8, 1967, Historical Publications of the United States Commission on Civil Rights, University of Maryland School of Law, http://www2.law.umaryland.edu/marshall/usccr/documents/pressrel67.pdf.

incremental way the mandate unfolded allowed leaders of three of the four school systems to work things out locally and ease their districts into the process. Even though Reidsville followed court orders more closely than HEW directives, all four districts had to submit multiple documents yearly to show progress. At this point in Rockingham County's educational history, the existence of four separate school systems may have actually provided advantages, as school leaders tried to meet federal guidelines. Even though there were truly some difficult logistics to work through, each school board had fewer schools and less expansive geographical zones to deal with than a merged system would have had. After allowing a period of transition, HEW's increasingly sharp demands for proven action also worked as an effective means of bringing about desegregated schools. In their dealings with the school systems in Rockingham County, HEW meant business and was unrelenting in pressuring local school officials.

It is true that to most white educational leaders in the county "freedom of choice" meant moving enough black students into white schools to meet minimum federal requirements, but even this action was a start in the right direction. Local boards became accustomed to approving transfers rather than denying them. More and more black and white students went to school together and scores of students became accustomed to knowing people of the other race in the intimate setting of the classroom before full integration. This process was especially true for those early children of *Brown* who started attending the formerly all-white schools in elementary school. By the time they reached ninth or tenth grade, they had spent a good amount of time with white neighbors and could act as guides for others just entering integrated schools. The much-maligned

freedom-of-choice plan actually worked quite well in the Madison-Mayodan and Rockingham County units from 1965-1968. In these systems, black and white leadership worked together to determine school restructuring and significant numbers of African American students chose to enroll at formerly all-white schools. It is true that the process was largely a one-way effort with the burden of desegregation falling to black families, but the total effect of these efforts was to show the public that some integration could take place peacefully and without alarm about lowering anyone's standards. In fact, several interviews with these "first children of *Brown*" revealed that their educational experiences during the freedom-of-choice years were overall positive ones.[7] In the Leaksville district, the sudden closing of Douglass High School and the full integration of three high school grades in 1966 stopped freedom of choice for these students, so the effectiveness of the plan there is a bit harder to interpret. Two more grades—seventh and eighth—were fully desegregated the following year—so that nearly half of the system's students were in schools no longer separated by race. The rapid response of the Leaksville school leaders to HEW pressure in 1966 and 1967 still brought about meaningful desegregation, even if the process happened suddenly and largely on white terms. With no further debate about whether the schools would be racially desegregated, the district went forward as a unitary system, something that had to happen as foundational for any future societal change in race relations. Despite the uneven unfolding of desegregation in the county's schools, achieving a unitary system was

7 Ravonda Dalton-Rann, interview by author, January 12, 2010; Joe Webster, interview by author, January 9, 2010; and Sherry Paulette Parker, interview by author, January 26, 2010.

something to be celebrated. No real progress in the black freedom struggle could have been achieved without eliminating segregated schools that existed as symbols of second-class citizenship in nearly every community in the South.[8]

Race Relations and Racial Politics

The trajectory of the history of the American South plays a crucial part in understanding the intersection of race and education in Rockingham County. As recent racial tensions and confrontations about Confederate monuments, "blackface," and other issues have shown us, there is much about our racial history that is misunderstood. The country is in many ways "still fighting the Civil War."[9] Still, it is common to believe that damaging racial attitudes are in the past and existed somewhere else but not in our own communities. This study of race and education revealed a series of events that localized larger patterns. Belief in the mythology of the Lost Cause that for many Southerners justified the fighting of the Civil War definitely took hold in Rockingham County. White supremacy manifested itself in local "white supremacy clubs," as well as in electoral votes for disfranchisement of African Americans in 1900 and for segregationists I. Beverly Lake and George Wallace in the 1960s. Jim Crow segregation relegating African Americans to second-class status radiated out from the schools, even determining

8 It is important to acknowledge the significant difference in the terms "desegregation" and "integration." Harold Webb, the associate director of the Division of Human Relations, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, differentiated between the concepts: "Desegregation" is "a physical movement of pupils," he said, while "integration" is "a question of equal education within a school." Webb quoted in Yvonne Baskin, "17 School Districts Still Dickering with HEW," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, August 18, 1969, 15, 19.

9 David Goldfield, *Still Fighting the Civil War: The American South and Southern History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002). The title of Goldfield's book is a fitting reminder of the difficulty Americans still have in dealing with race.

separate days for black and white children at the local fairs and holiday events and resulting in two different bookmobiles from the library—one for whites, another for blacks.[10]

In Rockingham County, in fact, as this research shows, there was much more racial tension and opposition to racial integration than has commonly been acknowledged. As discussed in an examination of the roles of Thomas Settle, Jr., and Albion Tourgée in the Reconstruction era, all was not harmonious locally between the races. White Republicans such as Settle and his fellow jurist Tourgée from Guilford County were essential defenders of newly emancipated black citizens. Both leaders at the state level, the judges joined to seek justice in the courts for members of the Ku Klux Klan, who terrorized local African Americans and their supporters, helping to trigger Governor William Holden's efforts to rein in the Klan. Numerous "outrages" were committed against area African Americans and their white allies in the late 1860s and early 1870s, and at least twenty local men were criminally charged for these acts. As Tourgée characterized this era of racial violence in the Piedmont area of North Carolina, it was "a strange, sad story . . . which fills the thirteen volumes of testimony, documents, and conclusions."[11] As evidenced by the elaborate 1927 parade and cross-burning in Reidsville, the Ku Klux Klan again exerted a strong presence in Rockingham County in the twentieth century. And after the *Brown* decision of 1954, virulent opposition arose in

10 "Reidsville Fair Opens Sept. 26," *Reidsville* (NC) *Review*, August 30, 1955; "Hare and Hound Chase Is Set," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, November 19, 1950, 16; "Library Founder Commemoration Plans Complete," *Greensboro* (NC) *Record*, February 19, 1953, 28.

11 Albion Winegar Tourgée, *A Fool's Errand, by One of the Fools* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1883), 197.

the county to any form of racial desegregation, culminating in the mid-1960s with Klan rallies, marches, and threats of physical violence.

What made possible some of the growth of extremist groups such as the Klan was the fact that their core goals were supported by others publicly known to be segregationists and of considerable status in their communities, a situation that was especially true in the aftermath of the *Brown* ruling in 1954. Not associated with violence, but still as vehemently anti-integration (and probably more effective in the mid-twentieth century) were the post-*Brown* segregationists, some of whom even claimed to be moderates.[12] Through this local study, it is possible to see more clearly a variety of strategies used by those intent on maintaining racial segregation. On the ground in Rockingham County, there were membership campaigns waged by the Patriots of North Carolina organization that garnered hundreds of supporters. Large anti-integration rallies were held in the years between *Brown* and the Civil Rights Act, and candidates with segregationist agendas ran and were elected to local school boards where they influenced policies. Local newspapers were flooded with opinion letters against efforts of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and other supporters of changes in the racial hierarchy. Although historians such as Neil R. McMillen have assessed the overall influence of segregationist organizations in North Carolina in the aftermath of *Brown* as weak, the evidence from Rockingham County argues instead for the stunting effect they had on desegregation efforts locally and in the

12 See Bissett, "The Dilemma over Moderates," 887-93, 929-30. Bissett concludes that the use of the terms "moderates" and "massive resisters" was meaningless as applied to the school leaders he studied. No matter their public rhetoric, the leaders of both the Alamance County and Burlington systems resisted desegregation until "their efforts to forestall it were completely exhausted."

Piedmont region. Calling the Patriots "a sedate version of the Citizens' Council," McMillen asserts that the organization "never demonstrated significant mass appeal," pointing out that by their third anniversary in 1958, the Patriots "had passed from the scene."[13] Research on Rockingham County, however, argues for the significant influence of the organization. As noted in the state's newspapers, among the charter members of the Patriots were "some of the most respected men in North Carolina." Headquartered in the Piedmont, their membership included leaders in local politics and, most importantly, from the area's manufacturing and business base. This membership component and the personal connections in Rockingham County meant that the Patriots had increased influence with North Carolina "businessman" governor Luther Hodges at a very crucial moment. In the few months just after the *Brown* decision was announced and Hodges took over the helm of state government, the new governor had a brief window of opportunity to choose acceptance of the authority of the Supreme Court's ruling. Instead, with the clear support of people that he knew and respected, many of them Patriot members, Hodges advocated maintaining segregation in the schools. The Patriots took on a very public role, publishing the "impressive list" of their members in newspapers across the state and supporting the Pearsall amendments devised by the state legislature. The intense attacks on Fifth District Congressman Thurmond Chatham for his failure to condemn the Supreme Court decision had a chilling effect on local and state politics. Arguing for the importance of the decision not to sign the Southern Manifesto, evidence

13 Neil R. McMillen, *The Citizens' Council: Organized Resistance to the Second Reconstruction, 1954-64* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1971), 111-5. A description of the early Patriots appeared in the *Winston-Salem Journal*, saying, "Few North Carolina Corporations can boast a more impressive list of charter members."

shows that Chatham lost his seat in Congress, due in part to the Patriots' bitter campaign against him. In this political turmoil as his re-election campaign was underway, Hodges even released a pamphlet of his statements on segregation that echoed the Patriots' rhetoric. In the Piedmont area and especially in Rockingham County, the Patriots significantly affected politics and educational policy. They crafted local school boards' student assignment policies and a resolution supporting segregation, influenced the outcome of the 1956 Congressional primary, and ultimately pushed the North Carolina governor to take a more public stand against desegregation, one that aligned with their members' views.

Perhaps the most influential leader in the history of race and education in Rockingham County was Governor Luther Hodges, who served in that position from 1954-1960. As historians such as William Chafe have argued, there was a short time just as the *Brown* decision was being processed by local citizens that, should their much-respected leaders have shown deference to the federal court and indicated acceptance of the ruling, the general public could have come along toward desegregation. As a newcomer to state politics and widely known as a regional leader in the textile industry, Hodges was among the southern governors singularly positioned to affect the direction his state would take. With the governor's acknowledgment of federal authority, the strong support of African Americans, much of the religious community, and a significant number of white moderates might have provided a foundation for acceptance of desegregation. Instead, Hodges declared, "I am determined not to mix the races in our schools." Hodges was very effective as a leader of business and industry but faltered

when confronted with the important racial issues of his time. It is true, as many historians have pointed out, that Hodges's language seemed moderate compared to the fiery rhetoric of other southern governors and segregationists preaching massive resistance. Nevertheless, he negatively influenced how the people of the state and especially his home county of Rockingham responded to the possibility of desegregation.[14]

These developments at the grassroots level in a single county also further help to explain the rise of modern conservatism in North Carolina and the rest of the South. The loudest calls of conservatives were for resistance of federal overreach, but, with the mandate of *Brown* as a catalyst, it must be understood that race was at the heart of the movement. Of course, white resistance to changes in the racial hierarchy was present in all time periods to varying degrees. Attempts by the federal government to protect newly emancipated black citizens and to enforce new ways of interaction were met with intense defiance during Reconstruction, for example. This resentment of change in the racial social order reemerged strongly and was tied directly to education in the desegregation era. Vocal opponents of the intervention of federal courts into the structure of local schools emerged in Rockingham County. Superintendents felt pressure to both comply with federal regulations and, in some cases, to resist calls for immediate desegregation.

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14 "Gov. Hodges States Stand on Anti-Integration in Schools," *Leaksville* (NC) *News*, May 24, 1956, 1; Reed Sarratt, *The Ordeal of Desegregation: The First Decade* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 6-7. Sarratt acknowledges that Hodges's public statements must have seemed "moderate" in comparison to those of fellow governors such as John M. Patterson of Alabama, who asserted that "if any school in Alabama is integrated, it will be over my dead body" or Ross Barnett of Mississippi, who promised that "Ross Barnett will rot in a federal jail before he will let one nigra cross the sacred threshold of our white schools."

As segregated schools were eliminated, there was some limited pushback locally against the white educators who had carried out the integration of the races and against what some argued was an avalanche of liberal changes of which they disapproved. The summer of 1966 saw some backlash in the Madison-Mayodan area against federal programs and changes in the schools that some citizens saw as threatening to traditional values. In Reidsville, in the aftermath of the desegregation process ordered by federal courts, school board terms were reduced from six to four years by a two-to-one vote of local citizens. Some saw this as a means of punishing their school leaders who had given in to federal power. A group called Concerned Citizens was active both in opposing compliance with court-ordered desegregation and in the reduction of board terms. Dr. Hunter Moricle, chairman of the Reidsville board, certainly saw the vote as one against him and others who had followed the court order. Confident that he and other board members could work effectively under the shortened terms, Moricle said that the board would continue to do their jobs "taking care of the children." "It's just the way this was done that I don't appreciate," he told reporters.[15] Clearly, white opinion was divided on issues of race. In Rockingham County, some key white moderates and allies of African Americans were helpful in the black freedom struggle. As already discussed, V. Mayo Bundy provided critical leadership to the Madison-Mayodan schools during desegregation. Journalists Russell, Mimi, and David Spear were stalwart supporters of racial equity on the pages of their family-owned newspaper, *The Messenger*, even risking

15 Joe McNulty, "Reidsville Board Rebuffed: Voters Reduce Board Term," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, March 10, 1970, 17.

the financial stability of their publication to challenge segregationists. In Reidsville, Mayor Julius Gwyn and his family showed their solidarity with the black community throughout a time of increasing racial tension, and their actions came to symbolize what racial harmony could mean.[16] Across the county numerous white ministers and religious congregations proclaimed their support for their black neighbors in their struggle to dismantle Jim Crow segregation. For most whites, however, racial segregation did not seem to be a critical part of their lives—until it was no longer maintained. Whites largely continued in their accustomed patterns, having become so entrenched in a world that demanded racial separation that they had little understanding of the damage that racial discrimination did to African Americans, or to themselves.

African American Agency and Activism

Neither the expansion of educational opportunities nor the desegregation of schools could have been effected without the agency of African Americans on their own behalf. Above all, this study of race and education in Rockingham County argues for the significant role of African Americans in developing local schools, sustaining them through segregation, and using a variety of strategies to dismantle Jim Crow structures, first in education and then in the wider society. Over many decades, the supervision of the African American schools in Rockingham County was largely left to the black community. As a result, black citizens developed their own leaders and chipped away at Jim Crow restrictions within a segregated system. Sometimes under difficult

16 "Keeping the Dream Alive Through Unity," The Twenty-first Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Unity Breakfast Program, January 21, 2019. In the Reidsville community, the actions of Julius Gwyn during the desegregation era are honored yearly with the Julius J. Gwyn Memorial Youth Award presented by the Reidsville Branch of the NAACP and the Human Relations Commission.

circumstances, African American teachers from the 1870s on into the next century provided instruction for their community's children—in the earliest log schools, in the frame school houses dotting the countryside in the 1930s and 1940s, and in the classrooms of the much-respected black high schools in the county—Douglass, Washington, and Drew. Outstanding long-serving black principals such as L. E. Boyd, S. E. Duncan, James A. McRae, H. K. Griggs, and John W. Dillard were revered leaders of their schools and communities. Some black school administrators left the area to accept state offices, professorships, and even a college presidency, while others spent their entire careers as county educators. Standing out in promoting black education in Rockingham County was Clarence C. Watkins, who for nearly three decades served as the "unofficial" superintendent of the African American schools.

Even though images of civil rights activism may not bring to mind the generations of students and teachers who labored in segregated schools, their efforts to gain access to education and improve their schools within a segregated racial hierarchy were significant. This history of race and education places ordinary people in the long black freedom struggle, as exemplified in their grassroots work in Rockingham County. Black citizens who pooled their money and purchased land for a Rosenwald school or who labored to dig a well so that their students could have access to water during the school day should be considered activists. Dozens of school advocates such as Joe Wright made frequent appearances before school boards to make sure black students had the supplies they needed and were learning in safe and comfortable environments. Others like Betsy Ann Franklin somehow managed for years to teach as many as fifty students from seven

different grades in a one-room school. Some such as the persistent mother who donned her hat and repeatedly requested bus transportation for her children who walked five miles to school were eventually successful in their efforts. Others like the mother who challenged the school board to explain why they were building yet another elementary school for white children while black students of all twelve grades were crowded into one facility were not able to bring about the changes they wanted. Yet, it is clear that the many decades of hard work on the part of African Americans to build and maintain their own schools within the segregated system was a critical part of the long black freedom struggle.

Local black leadership was the key to the survival and effectiveness of black educational institutions and the ultimate dismantling of the Jim Crow segregated system. As nearly every work on civil rights asserts, the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling was a watershed moment in the black freedom struggle.[17] Bolstered by the authority of the federal courts, activists could challenge racial segregation in every Southern community and beyond. Evidence from Rockingham County confirms that the decision was, indeed, transformative, making other challenges to Jim Crow segregation possible. Working out school desegregation locally offered opportunities for many citizens to become leaders, providing the impetus for broader civil rights activism in the county. Critical to this

17 Among the best-known debates about the impact of the *Brown* decision is the dialogue among historians regarding Michael J. Klarman's "backlash thesis." Klarman argued that the Supreme Court ruling did more to stir up white opposition than to inspire civil rights activism. James C. Cobb and others countered Klarman with assertions that *Brown*, though it clearly was met with significant white resistance, was a powerful catalyst for the civil rights movement. See Michael J. Klarman, "How *Brown* Changed Race Relations: The Backlash Thesis," *Journal of American History* 81, no. 1 (June 1994): 81-118; and James C. Cobb, *The* Brown *Decision, Jim Crow, and Southern Identity* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2005).

activism were the local affiliates of the NAACP, especially the Reidsville branch. Historian Raymond Gavins has called activists such as these "a forgotten generation in North Carolina civil rights history."[18] It is true that the work of the NAACP is sometimes underrated when compared to the direct action campaigns of other civil rights groups. In Rockingham County, however, the NAACP was the primary organization to confront segregation. Their challenge to the dual school system and legal support of the first children to request transfers was crucial in initiating change locally. Through the work of the NAACP, the black freedom struggle in Rockingham County broadened from eliminating segregated schools to gaining access to public facilities, equitable treatment in local businesses, fair hiring and promotion practices, and increased political representation. Working with the Reidsville Bi-Racial Committee, NAACP members desegregated local pools and restaurants. Local NAACP members initiated voter registration drives and took on campaigns for positions in local government. Some early advances in employment took place in the fall of 1963, when the Rockingham County Sheriff hired the county's first black deputies, and further NAACP actions brought about expanded job opportunities in area industries and businesses.[19] The crowning achievement for the NAACP in Rockingham County was assuredly the 1971 *Griggs v. Duke Power* U.S. Supreme Court ruling on workplace equity. Fourteen workers at the

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18 Raymond Gavins, "The NAACP in North Carolina during the Age of Segregation," in *The Civil Rights Movement*, ed. Jack E. Davis (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, Inc., 2001), 172.

19 "Sheriff Axsom Appoints Second Negro Deputy in Addition to Nine Negro Reserve Deputies," *The Advisor*, September 1963, 53; "History—Reidsville Branch of the NAACP 1947-2009: Sixty-Two Years of 'Bold Dreams, Big Victories,'" Files of the Reidsville Branch of the NAACP, Elm Grove Baptist Church, Reidsville, North Carolina. This history records the NAACP's role in attaining employment for African Americans at a wide variety of area workplaces, including Burlington Mills, the main public library, J. C. Penney, Guilford Dairy, A & P Grocery, and the local hospital.

Duke Power steam station in Draper, including Willie Boyd, who would soon become the third president of the Reidsville NAACP branch, filed suit against the company, arguing that they were being limited to janitorial labor because of race and not because, as the company asserted, they lacked high school diplomas or failed to pass tests unrelated to the work. In 1971, after the case made its way to the United States Supreme Court, justices ruled in favor of the workers, "barring employment practices that had the effect of excluding minorities or women from jobs for which they otherwise were qualified."[20] Advances such as these took place with pressure from local members of the NAACP, many of whom had been instrumental in desegregating schools, and came to fruition only after many years of petitioning.

A concept that reformer Jane Addams called "democratic social ethics" can be applied to the work of those who invested in establishing, maintaining, and improving their public schools and who tried to assure racial equity in the access to education. Historian Mark Elliott has defined this concept as "the duties and obligations of citizens to act in ways that respect . . . the equal moral value and rights of other citizens."[21] The long history of race and education reveals that this concern for right treatment was at the heart of efforts to improve education and eliminate racial inequities in the public schools

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20 *Willie S. Griggs, James S. Tucker, Herman Martin, William C. Purcell, Clarence M. Jackson, Robert A. Jumper, Lewis H. Harrison, Jr., Willie Boyd, Junior Blackstop, John D. Hatchett, Clarence Purcell, Eddie Galloway, and Eddie Broadnax, Appellants, v. Duke Power Company, a Corporation, Appellee,* 420 F.2d 1225 (4th Cir. 1970), Justia US Law, https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/appellate-courts/F2/420/1225/307832/; Barry Bearak and David Lauter, "Column One: Tense Steps to Ending Racial Bias," *Los Angeles* (CA) *Times*, November 03, 1991, http://articles.latimes.com/print/1991-11-03/news/mn-1562_1_north-carolina; Leslie Phillips, "Janitor's Suit Set the Standard," *USA Today*, [1990?], Clippings Files, Rockingham County Historical Collections, Gerald B. James Library, Rockingham Community College, Wentworth, North Carolina. Quotation is from the Phillips article.

21 Mark Elliott and John David Smith, eds., *Undaunted Radical: The Selected Writings and Speeches of Albion W. Tourgée* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010), 8.

of Rockingham County. Fifteen years after *Brown*, local NAACP leader J. A. Griggs expressed both regret and optimism as he looked back on the ruling. So much strife could have been avoided, he said, "if there had been a sincere effort on everyone's part to comply with the 1954 Supreme Court decision." "Once the schools desegregate," he concluded confidently, "we'll be on our ways toward a nation of racial equality."[22] Scholar Glenda Gilmore even asserts that the "strength of public education in North Carolina has resulted in large part from the African American fight for inclusion." The historical narrative, she argues, should emphasize how education for all has been improved "by challenging exclusionary and racist policies and politics at every turn to build a better public school system."[23] Certainly, the history of race and education in Rockingham County from 1820 to 1970 reflects this truth. As local school superintendent V. Mayo Bundy told a regional audience in 1966, we "must realize that America has always been a nation in the process of becoming and that our declaration of full citizenship has never been as easy to achieve as we have proclaimed."[24] One way that Americans have progressed toward the national goals of democracy and responsible citizenship has been through the schoolhouse door. For the betterment of society, it is important to continue to build a strong and equitable system of public education so that all citizens can see their local schoolhouse as a symbol of hope and democratic promise.

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22 "Area NAACP Leader Calls Ruling Inevitable," *Greensboro* (NC) *Daily News*, December 3, 1969, 19.

23 Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, "Educational Capital and Human Flourishing: North Carolina's Public Schools and Universities, 1865-2015," in *New Voyages to Carolina: Reinterpreting North Carolina History*, Larry E. Tise and Jeffrey J. Crow, eds. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 196.

24 "Bundy Is Only Educator on UNC-G Panel, *The* (Madison, NC) *Messenger*, May 5, 1966, 1.

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